

THE DOUBLE DEALER

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The DOUBLE DEALER

".....I can deceive them both by speaking the truth."

DEFENDING ARTIFICIALITY

THE main literary stream has been flowing towards realism for fifty years. Imitation of nature has come all the way from Zola, who tried to portray "real" life by jotting down the surface appearance, through Tolstoi, who as George Moore says, raced with nature as successfully as a swimmer in a canal racing a locomotive. It has arrived at an expressionism in which is represented the inner workings of the mind, by a symbolism at once naive and grotesque. It tries to render the effect not through intellectual concepts so much as through mediate sensation stimuli. Such a work is "The Enormous Room" by Mr. Cummings, reviewed in this number. Such also is a far more famous book, "Ulysses," by James Joyce. But it will be perceived that this also is only a method and that the ambition of a Cummings or a Joyce is that of a Zola or a Tolstoi, namely the representation of life or nature.

Let us not confuse motive and manner. The new manner, the new method is radical. It is shocking to the classicist but the motive is old hat. Indeed, it seems that realism in this sense is an unquestioned authority. Artificiality is painted black, its opprobrium is all but crushing. And yet among this welter of raw meat eaters I am going to venture a few words in its palliation.

Have you ever paused long enough to

consider this heresy, that everything worth while in life is either out and out artifice or else artificialized, man made, not God made? You have heard biologists boast of that wonderful machine the human body, yet it is always getting out of order. Man, if he deemed it economic, would make a better machine than that and surely one not so costly or wasteful. He builds houses that he is certain will hold the funeral of his grandchildren, statues which outlast the most longevous turtle.

Try living next to this nature you enthuse about; sleep in the open without clothes or covering; try eating uncooked meat. The idea is of course preposterous of ever getting really to nature, for we must employ artifice even in the pursuit of food.

Tell me which is more beautiful, a well-dressed man or woman or their naked counterparts? Go to nature for your examples of beauty in the nude, not to Art, for there again is artifice, nasty artificiality. Will you find nature an aesthetic creation?

But I go a good deal further. I assert that the more artificial we become the better off we are. Which is more enjoyable, grapes or wine? It is questionable whether true justice exists at all. Where it is found, at least, in a botched and baffled way is in human society. Nature will have none of it or of mercy either. Pictorial Art lives nowhere off of canvas. Nature is incapa-

ble of a canvas, without discords. Her music is an elementary vocal exercise, her poetry is non-existent.

Man's inhumanity to man, it is said, would make the angels weep. Well, they must shed crocodile tears for their humanity or kindness to us is one of our most charitable fictions.

With all this in mind I cannot see that the realist is doing anything save fling the imperfections of nature in our faces. Painting the lily, building up artificiality becomes the necessary duty of the writer. The consummate artists who have written of man as he is, Conrad, Turgeniev, Shakespeare, have not tried to expose his mundanity, they have sought to glorify his nobility, his bravery against impossible odds. Cabell has sensed this. He says in "Beyond Life"—

"We comprehend that we are not reading merely about 'John Jones, aged 26, who gave his address as 187 West Avenue,' but about humanity — and about the strivings of that ape reft of his tail, and grown rusty at climbing, who yet, however dimly, feels himself to be a symbol, and the frail representative of Omnipotence in a place that is not home; and so strives blunderingly, from mystery to mystery, with pathetic make-shifts, not understanding anything, greedy in all desires, and honey-combed with poltroonery, and yet ready to give all, and to die fighting, for the sake of that undemonstrable idea."

This is why I have so little use for much of modern fiction. In its effort to be unsentimental it has succeeded in becoming as meaningless and as tiresome as nature itself and almost as unsympathetic. It is well to remember that man alone tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.

"UNDER THE HILL" AND BEHIND THE BARN.

I have a bone to pick with Mr. Carl Van Vechten. By "I" I mean myself and not the other two buccaneers who do these bits. In fact, I haven't conferred with either of them over the matter. We never confer over such negligible matters as the doing of "editorials," that is, except when the pronoun "*we*" is employed to voice a mutual bias. But to begin with, Mr. Van Vechten, as you know by this, is an excellent critic and has at his command an astonishing vocabulary; truly, he seems to me a sort of walking Thesaurus, out Thesaurusing by far the piquant Mr. Rascoe whose work has also appeared in these columns. Being one of our valuedest contributors I am going to try to let Mr. Van Vechten down easily. Yet, lack-a-day, I am but a tyro and he is as I said before an excellent critic. And this all by way of friendliness.

To what I refer is Mr. Van Vechten's article on Ronald Firbank, the nice words he has to say about this young gentleman, but more especially his endorsement unqualified of "Valmouth" Mr. Firbank's latest tour de force. No sooner had I read in manuscript the delightfully said delightful things Mr. Van Vechten says about "Valmouth," than post haste I besought Mr. Grant Richards, that estimable publisher of "Ninety days" and now Mr. Firbank's publisher, to ship me a copy. If you'll pardon a lift from one of our recent issues (April) here is, in part, Mr. Van Vechten's estimate of "Valmouth":

"Ignorant as to whether Valmouth was a liqueur or a new variety of dog, with some curiosity I awaited Stuart Rose's gift, which, when it came, displayed qualities inherent in both these surmises... and yet, it was not either. 'Valmouth' was a book... Valmouth, indeed! with its lusty impatient peacocks and parties, its portrait of the always surprising Mrs. Hurstpierpoint, Lady Parvoula de Panzoust, and her pursuit of the josephian shepherd, and, above all, that ripping old coon, Mrs. Yajñavalkya, procuress and masseuse, who in the midst of the most utter nigger jargon, inserts such phrases as '*plein air!*' The opus ends with an amazing wedding, as smartly attended as the Princess Mary's, in which the protagonists are a juvenile English naval officer and the young negress, Niri-Esther. And just before this coda, the author of the symphony has indicated an opportunity for a superb cadenza."

I say I have just read "Valmouth" and I must state that I am quite at variance with Mr. Van Vechten, for though externally it has all the appearance of a book, I am, unlike him, still at a loss if it be liqueur or dog. It seems to me a pot-pourri of both with a dash of—(well, I daren't say it here, but you know what I mean, or will if you read it) for condiment. Certainly it is an adolescent rehash of beauxbellesbuncombedungdrivel of the "men who knew how in the old days" than even Beardsley's "Under the Hill." Beardsley, to his credit, never completed *his* echo. Lesbianistic, sodomistic, Narcissussistic and like productions should be left, in my modest opinion, to persons male or female beyond the puppy period. A youth in his twenties may be credited

with having first hand information on such natural and unnatural phenomena, but surely it is ambitious, if not to say indiscreet, in him to attempt to dress up or expose such youthful and senile pastimes in the brave lingo of Rabelais and Casanova. A restraint, a precision, an aloofness, a gusto maybe will turn the trick, but the verbal orgasms of inhibited puberty will not. I quote Mr. Van Vechten again wherein he refers to Mr. Firbank's work as a whole, which it appears is all cast in the same milieu:

"Sophisticated virgins and demi-puceaux will adore these books. Married or unmarried persons over thirty will find them either shocking or tiresome, depending on the individual temperament of the reader. I have a suspicion that a few delightful old ladies will have a quiet closet laugh on the sly."

Well, being neither sophisticated virgin nor of the demi-puceaux I can't answer for them. A married person a trifle over thirty I am, so let me put in that I found "Valmouth" neither shocking nor tiresome, only somewhat out of my line—that is, regarded as a sound artistic production. Beardsley's "Under the Hill," what we know of it, though perverse-degenerate if you please, somehow conveys the impression of being, at least, detachedly perverse-degenerate. "Valmouth" is perverse-degenerate without this detached deliberateness that one senses in all of the works of the "Nineties." I agree with Mr. Van Vechten, "there is no sentimentality or irony in this work; hardly even cynicism," but I add there is also no grace, no humor, no genre, no gusto. It is, in fine, a thin amateurish attempt, it seems to me, to break into the preciosa-curiosaaerotica category. The subtle, sometimes

absurd, but always amusing innuendoes of Cabell are not here. In their place one is constantly, phrase after phrase, paragraph after paragraph, more or less palled by the obvious iterations of a talented young man with but one thought—sex perversion, and, by Zeus! we've already had enough of such poppycock. It seems to me that this sort of stuff is hurting present day literature. It's all so sickly and puerile. Stout pornography—O. K. But Firbank and his slaving grannies and D. H. Lawrence and his cerebral erotics—a bas! All this belongs to Germany, France and Italy. The Anglo-Saxon only makes a dunce out of himself when he attempts to handle the stuff.

To my mind, the reason good writing of our day is not read by good readers is that the critics seem to have lost their minds or their eyes or their minds' eyes. The critics inform you that this or that book is a notable book, marks a new epoch in literature, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, and, properly seduced, you go out and buy this or that book, as your purse allows, and you go home and you sit down in your Morris and you open this or that book and you read and you blink and you sigh and you fidget and you—well, you either go to sleep and awaken with a headache, or you toss it to the house-maid, or you try to get your money back from the bookseller. Whatever you do you feel as if someone had put something over on you and you swear that you'll never let it happen again—but you do. There you are! So all my mumbling and grumbling goes for nothing. Pouf, it's *peu de chose* anyway, all this twaddle about books and things. A ride in the flivver, a turn on the bridle-path, a couple of sets

at tennis, a game of bridge, a night with the boys—these are things, eh? or eh?

Before adieu, let me get back to "Valmouth" for a moment. Perhaps, after all, Mr. Firbank is a great satirist with his thumb at his nose. Perhaps I missed the gesture. If so, I duly recant. At any rate, satire or no, the book is to my mind a poor piece of writing.

THE NEGLECT OF THE CLASSICS.

ONE deplures because it is customary, the neglect of the classics by the present generation in America. It is unfortunate that in a nation of such avid readers the more venerable masters should be ignored by nearly everybody, especially by the alleged "intellectuals." That the classics *are* ignored cannot be denied. But that this neglect of heirlooms at the present juncture is an unmitigated evil, I doubt. The state of American culture is not so dark as the academicians would have us believe.

As for the neglect of masterpieces by the masses and by those too impecunious to purchase library editions, Mr. Halde-man-Julius is manfully remedying that. His best seller among his millions of volumes, he asserts, is "The Death of Socrates." It is true that there are few of the young or old "intellectuals" (an absurd but acceptable designation) who read the works of such estimable authors as Catullus, Plato, Aeschylus, Homer, Ben Jonson, Chaucer, Fielding or Milton, but it is also true, I believe, that never before was the intelligent reading public of America so alert in its appreciation of good writing. Never before has it been so deeply interested

in the making of literature, so eager in recognizing and honoring good work white-hot from the pens of living men.

Men who could not, to save themselves from hanging, translate one epigram of Martial, are devouring with precise appreciation the extraordinarily good poetry of Mr. Robinson, Mr. Eliot and Mr. De la Mare. Men who could not, even with a pony, English "The Golden Ass," are enjoying with real understanding the excellent romance of "Jurgen."

The appreciation of good poetry requires the same aesthetic preparation and equipment whether that poetry was produced in Rome during the consulship of M. Acilius Balba or in Washington Square last week. One requires the same discerning eye to appreciate good prose of today as to appreciate good prose of yesterday. The intelligent reading public of America (it is small, of course) has a discerning eye and a sensitive ear which can be compared with those of the Elizabethan audience. It is at this moment more intensely interested in the living or the gestating literature than in the ancient and the embalmed. It remembers that it can return to the ancient literature when it pleases, but that by neglect of the new literature it might prevent that literature from being.

The American intellectual, fevered like the Elizabethan intellectual, is all for appreciating, encouraging and honoring the art of the day in which he lives. He is weak on Latin and Greek, but he knows good poetry or good prose when he sees it. If that poetry or prose is written by a young gentleman who

can be encouraged to produce more like it, the American intellectual is more deeply concerned with this young gentleman than with Pindar, who is not likely to respond to appreciation with additional strophes.

It is well for a nation suddenly aware of its aesthetic potentialities to create and to foster its creations. It is possible that a real literature is about to blossom from the seeds of the old world transplanted in the new. We must remember that, as Whitman said, "To have great poets there must be great audiences, too." The American reading public is trying seriously to become a worthy audience and it is trying to be an audience for living men. It is at this moment an appreciative audience and it is assisting in the production of books which may conceivably be classics as truly as books that were issued on some other Wednesday or Thursday a thousand years ago.

A survey of the American publishing field for the last ten years shows clearly this movement toward an alert and sympathetic attitude to sound or seriously intended work. The old publishers are printing more decent writing than ever before. And the cry of the younger generation for sound or, at least, sincere art, has been answered royally by many excellent young publishers who have made honest, vigorous and often successful efforts to print the best writing available. These publishers, whose productions are of course an index to the demand of the hour, are proving, I think, that the intelligent American reading public is more appreciative of sound literary art than ever before.

San Antonio.

By JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

When a dry rain of mandolins, dancing and fluttering, beats on the
stiffened tuberoses,
That hold up their chaste waxwhite chalices, chill to the breeze of the
night
That runs out of red-gullied hills and creaks in the pomegranate bushes,
That flare out in startling scarlet down the gravelled avenue,
I will look up to the sky and see the long trail of The Milky Way rolling
southwestward,
And I will dream only of you.

Slowly, the moon
Passes, a lithe brown flute-player,
Lazily blowing his melancholy song
On streets where dust rises and settles;
Slowly the red earth cracks and the yellow fronts of the houses
Stare into silence;
Slowly life rolls a shallow and straggling brown river,
Unhurried, from dream toward dream;

When a loud wind runs laughing and clattering from the pinyon clad
heights to the westward,
And the riders of old mount and follow, bronze shapes, sunken cheeks, and
lean muscles,
Flapping their hats as they spur their ponies on—
When the silent brown aisles give up the old monks that once walked there,
And the buffalo herds stamp again on the free wide prairie,
I shall return, in the dawn.

The Dance of the Impotent.

A Note on the Last State of Poetry.

By CUTHBERT WRIGHT.

WE live in a time when poetry, viewed from the standpoint of popularity, has been elevated almost to the position of a major art. Never was so much rhymed composition produced in lines of equal length as in the period immediately before the war in England and America, and never was so large a proportion of it read. Mr. Masfield's "The Everlasting Mercy" and his "Widow in the Bye Street" appeared, and at once became the models of all really well-read sophomores. The "Spoon River Anthology" (to anticipate a little) was a best seller in the land of Florence L. Barclay. The mere popularity of poetry is such even now that Mr. Oppenheim is enabled to bring out a book entitled, with the humble moderation of its author's craft, "Our First National Art." Who will forget the days when the massive, nabisco-hued volumes of contemporary verse-strumming, compiled by the too susceptible Mr. Braithwaite, appeared season by season with the periodical persistence of an Equinox? And the melodious quire of Irish songsters chanting all together like the morning stars in the branches of Hyde Park? And the Poetry Societies? And the little reviews? And the Anthologies? It was the good old time.

The war, and also perhaps, a form of the eternal Perversity caused the poets to complicate their vogue, without at all damming their collective flow, by producing a revolution which was at the same time a reaction. The star of Mr.

Masfield had no sooner risen behind the setting moon of Kipling than the pale standards of the Imagists glittered ominously on the zenith, and the whole host of vers librists stormed singing the flanks of Parnassus. It was an Homeric but bloodless battle in which the feathers of the songbirds flew high, but which entailed (as a glance at contemporary sales will show) no real losses on either side. To be sure, the jeweled and spice-laden volumes of Miss Lowell sold, and the "Spoon River Anthology" sold to a degree explained both by its real merit and its scandalous intention. But across the Pond, the works of Messrs. Graves, Nichols, Drinkwater, Gibson, *et tutti quanti* also sold in a fashion to prove that the public was not unfaithful to its gods. And then only think of Alfred Noyes? The popularity of these gentlemen (we are not speaking of Mr. Noyes, who for some reason never went to war but did his bit to the extent of several hundred pages) was such that no sooner were they safely out of uniform than they rushed headlong across the Atlantic, intent on making golden hay as long as the astonishing sunlight lasted. If anything, the banners of popularity rest with the troubadours of the old regime, Imagism having paled, as was to be expected of a movement which concentrated exclusively on a form of rhetoric, the world no longer finding anything very palpitating in mere free verse.

In France, the disgust, moral exhaustion, and sense of desperate hope too

long deferred, probably superinduced by the war for Civilization, has had a singular repercussion in the realm of poetry. The collective term usually applied to this complex reaction is Dada or Dadaism, but it would be the greatest of errors to lump under this vocable a whole generation of writers who, for one reason or another, have abandoned orthodox forms of expression, and thus find themselves, often to their astonishment, classified among the futurists of the epoch. It would be like ascribing to shell-shock the middle-aged genius and mature technique of Mr. James Joyce. Dadaism, as an integral movement, may possibly be a farcical fad, a pleasantry—its opponents would say a bad pleasantry—but considered as a tendency and direction, it has reality and significance and even a certain logical relationship with the past. In its initial manifesto, the Hebro-Roumanian, M. Tzara, godfather of a movement sired by Marinetti, announced, in very bad French, a principle not without a certain axiomatic and appealing clarity:

DADA MEANS NOTHING.*

And underneath:

If I shout
Ideal, ideal, ideal,
Knowledge, knowledge, knowledge,
Boomboom, boomboom, boomboom,

I have set down exactly enough progress, law, morality, and all the other fine things that so many very intelligent people have discussed in so many books, to come finally to this; that after all, each one has danced according to his own boomboom, and that, so far as he is concerned, his boomboom is right: satisfaction of a sickly curiosity; private bell for inexplicable needs; bath; pecuniary difficulties; stomach with a repercussion on life... Measured by the scale of eternity, every action in vain.

He continued:

The protest with both fists of all one's

being in destructive action: DADA. Knowledge of all the means rejected up to the present by the pudic sex of convenient compromise and politeness: DADA. Abolition of the memory: DADA. Abolition of archaeology; DADA. Abolition of the prophets, DADA. Abolition of the future: DADA. Jump elegant and without prejudice from one harmony to the other sphere; howling of irritated colours; interweaving of contraries and all contradictions, grotesques and inconsequences; Liberty: DADA DADA DADA; Life. (Dada No. 3, Edited by M. Tristan Tzara.)

Thus the young dogs of the new poetic Spring barked on old Winter's traces, and a demi-dozen little reviews sprang up in their tracks, pullulating with similar prefaces. *Dadaphone: No. 7* has this confession of faith from M. Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes:

What is beautiful? What is ugly? What is strong, weak, great? What is Carpentier, Renan, Foch? Don't know. What am I? Don't know? Don't know, don't know, don't know.

And this from the baddest boy of the group, M. Francis Picabia, who has just broken with his little comrades:

Dada smells of nothing; it is nothing, nothing, nothing.

It is like your ambitions: nothing.

Like your idols: nothing.

Like your politicians: nothing.

Like your artists: nothing.

Nothing really counting then but the sensation of the moment and its spontaneous expression, and even that not counting for much, it is manifestly the duty of all good Dadas to ridicule, forget or ignore the creative achievements of the past—classicism, romanticism, realism, impressionism, symbolism, cubism—and armed with war-paint and tomahawk, ullulating every variety of savage screech and Mohawk yell, to stamp under and utterly annihilate the ridiculous pretensions of the present. The Pantheon, Notre Dame de Chartres, the Xystine frescoes, "Madame Bovary," and so on, represent delusions and dreams; they are one and all varieties

*We are indebted for this and some of the following translations to Mr. F. S. Flint.

of the Arch-Lie that art means something and is something. Let them go. Let us destroy the last cathedral with the stones of the last museum. Let nothing be spared, not even the most unpromising movements immediately antedating our barbaric yawp. Post-Impressionism which, in its purity, made no unholy pact with decoration or literature, but attempted to project painting into the realm of mathematics and pure mind seems to the Dada as preposterous as a Bougureau Madonna. "What is the mind *par exemple?*" demand these latter-day Pilates costumed by Picasso. Tolstoy had demanded with Biblical bitterness: Why all this fuss about art when men suffer and children starve? The Dadas ask the same question but with no humanitarian implication. A generation which has seen 1,700,000 human beings, including its own brothers and friends, annihilated to the political caprices of M. Poincaré, may be pardoned for finding the pretensions of mankind to an ultimate wisdom and goodness a little fanciful. A social revolution might be good fun, considered from the Dantonist standpoint of smashing the police and upsetting the pontiffs, but the moral and human implications of such an event cannot be taken seriously. The guillotine might be a success taken as comic relief, but as a purifying force, it is no more to be relied upon than a pulpit. Art for man's sake, then, strikes them as supremely absurd, but not quite so stupendously silly as the cry which charmed the Nineties: Art for Art's sake. What is Art, oh Man, most ignoble and amusing of animals, that thou shouldst be mindful of It?

Manifestoes are always so much easier to compose than to put into spon-

taneous practice that the Dada output up to date does not fill one with confidence in its uproarious vitality. The Dadas being, for the most part, tired young men, without imagination or a spark of real irony, are reduced to productions of which the following is very far from being the most unintelligible:

PSYCHOLOGIE ELECTRIQUE

Loi d'Ohm ou d'Homme

$$E = \frac{I}{R}$$

La force électromotrice d'un homme égale l'intensité de sa volonté divisée par la résistance opposée. M-R-Homère, ne mets plus tes doigts dans ton nez.

391 ne contient pas d'arsenic. On peut le prendre en toute sécurité et en secret sans rien changer à ses habitudes.

CA VEUT DIRE CE QUE CA VEUT DIRE

ou
CA NE VEUT PAS DIRE CE QUE CA NE VEUT PAS DIRE.

There is little or nothing of the gamin of genius in these well-dressed young men sporting a so expert anemia. They lack the unhealthy but unquenchable vitality of Gavroche. The latter thumbs his nose at parsons and potentates, but in aesthetics he is a classicist, and, admitted to the claque, he applauds with discreet enthusiasm M. de Max and Mlle. Sorel. The irony, such as it is, of the average Dada seems reserved for his own confrères. He is terribly at home with Mammon. The most intelligible representative of the school, M. Jean Cocteau*, has been jockeyed, by God knows what caprice of snobbism, into the niche of aesthetic arbiter in the Paris of the twenties. He is the writer of several pallid little books packed with thin epigrams, and the author of an amusing Dadaist pantomime, "*Le Boeuf*

*We feel sure that this statement would be contested by M. Cocteau, and still more violently by the Dadas. We only mean that there are distinct "notes" in his work which link him unmistakably with the movement.

sur le Toit." He has recently become, too, the unofficial patron of a bar, frequented by a few aesthetes and dollar-laden Yankees. And he is, it seems to us, a small, sharp, prehensile mind, wholly lacking in creative imagination or real irony, the sort of mind which, because it has nothing to say, says it with the maximum of advertisement, an actually disconcerting retailer of commonplace, polisher of platitude. Here is a typical Cocteau *mot* which would have done credit to the late Colonel Roosevelt. "When a work of art seems in advance of its time, it is only because its time is behind hand." This profound affirmation is simple, even at first glance, and one feels quite sure that it is his own. In another slim, adolescent volume ("*Les Noces Massacrés*") he says that it took him nearly four years to recover from the "poisonous" "Picture of Dorian Gray." So candid an admission fills us with commiseration, and renders comment unnecessary. Alas, poor Dada! Like M. Cocteau's pantomime, you might have been much; at least, you could have been much more. To the fall of museums and the down-rushing of cathedrals, there has succeeded among the advance-guard, a mournful and portentous silence which is very like sterility. M. Picabia, who, everything considered, was very much superior to his associates in the art of kidding highbrows, has said it all when at last he turned and rent his little friends. "I broke away from them because they smothered me; each day in their company I became sadder and sadder; they bored me."

The serious achievement of Dadaism was to compromise tradition, to cast a certain discredit on all the works of the

mind. It carried the dogma of absurdity to the limits of fanatical zeal; it was a Jacobinism of pure nonsense. "There is only one truth, steadfast, healing, salutary," says a character in André Salmon's merry and bitter novel, "*La Négrresse du Sacré Coeur*," "and that is the Absurd." Why build cathedrals rather than public libraries or libraries rather than cathedrals? Why build anything? Why go with women rather than men, or vice versa? It is a distinction no more serious than preferring Trollope to Meredith, or choosing an ice instead of a tart at dessert. The inviolability of sex is a myth; the sacred significance of art a colossal joke. What really and solely matters, as M. Tzara put it, is one's personal and particular boomboom, "to spit out in a luminous cascade one's harsh or amorous thought" . . . liberty, spontaneity, delirium. Hence the fondness of Dadas for the more obvious forms of popular entertainment, which, produced without intellectual effort or refinement, are the vital illustrations of their theory,—cinemas, circuses, clowns, menageries, trained alligators, learned seals, jazz. The American comic film of Mack Sennett and his peers is their Homer, and from their very comprehensible standpoint, Charlie Chaplin is more important to mankind than Shakespeare. That terrific horseplay, the chairs which collapse, the cream pies submerging a human visage, the unreal explosions annihilating whole communities, all this delights their souls with an escape from life into a kingdom of stupendous clowning from which, not only the moral code is excluded, but better yet, the very shadow of reason. "Go to the performing crocodile and learn to be wise," they adjure the young man

with Doctor Freud under one arm and *The New Republic* under the other. "Stop all that jabber, and don't open your mouth again except to laugh!" Enough of Beauty with a big B, they cry in comprehensible disgust, Beauty, that marred, mishandled goddess whose name is in every mouth, the tresses of whose shining head, have, for ninety-nine years, been dragged in to cover the unimpressive nudity of negligible poets. To be sure, her eternal virginity is in no peril from a large proportion of her lovers. In short, there is only one word which completely covers the Dada philosophy, the word which occurs most frequently in the works of M. Picabia, a word which, in the French language, has five letters, and in the American, four . . . the word of Cambronne. Baudelaire in his day said it to the bourgeois. Dada says it to the artist.

It is not so insane; there is even a great deal in it. To realize how salutary was the Dada corrective applied to poetry, one has only to glance over the English and American anthologies (Model 1921-1922).

During the last hundred years, a whole line of poets seems to have looked upon their art as a vehicle for the exteriorization of themselves. The Christian and Romantic Revolutions, the renewed discovery of a debilitated Man, centre of all things, may possibly explain the tone of nineteenth century literature to those who enjoy the game of establishing factitious connections between the pretended philosophy of an epoch and its aesthetic phenomena. From these or other causes, it is evident, at any rate, that the nineteenth century witnessed a progressive degeneration of the objective instinct. Let it be well understood

that this criticism of poetic egomania does not apply to the two most original geniuses of recent times in poetry, Rimbaud and Walt Whitman, who are sometimes superficially classed as tremendous egoists. It applies, only very relatively, to the orthodox and official high priest of the epoch, Tennyson, whose vast array of printed work contains an enormous amount of impersonal and exquisite observation. Arthur Rimbaud, as Mr. F. S. Flint very well says, "did not paint himself"; he seemed rather to descend, body and soul, into his work, to incarnate the electricity of adolescence in the humble symbols of phrase and rhythm like Jesus Christ in the "accidents" of bread and wine. The exteriorization of Whitman in the circumstance of nature, cities, crowds, labour, endless savannas and the forms and faces of comrades, had something of the same sacramental character. He was at once assuaged deity and bleeding victim; similar to the double personage in Trinitarian theology, his passion submerged in floods the dams of his own personality, and the object of that tremendous love was the same as God's—Man. There is all the difference in the world between the "egoism" of these demigods and the sort of auto-erotic banjo-strumming which tinkles and titillates in the anthologies, Georgian or American. It may be said that, by its definition, lyric poetry implies a large amount of what we have called poetic egotism. It is permissible to doubt this, and just because it may be difficult to write a piece of lyric verse without employing, at least once, the letter "I", there is no reason why the first person singular should occur five thousand, six hundred times in the Oxford Book of

English Verse or the Victorian Anthology. "One of our most gifted lyricists," Mr. J. C. Squire, editor of the *London Mercury*, has written a neat couplet in which it only occurs four times:

I make no sound, nor can I, nor can I
show
What depth I have, if any depth below.

This is, after all, unexpectedly modest in temper, but in another verse, the poet is once more stoutly reassured of his own importance:

Beneath my skull-bone and my hair,
Covered like a poisonous well,
There is a land... And so on.

Always my soul; my, my, my, me, me, me! A convinced Dada would reply to Mr. Squire's melodious affirmation: *Et après?* (Read "Who the hell cares?")

And worst of all, ever since the bell-like simplicity of Mr. A. E. Housman's happy monosyllables turned loose a mob of imitators, a good half of the present poetic generation seems to feel bound to express its great thoughts in an intolerable First Reader jargon which even the literary critics of the *New York Times* might peruse without mental pain. One of the last and most engaging of the class, Miss Edith Sitwell, writes like an inspired kid, suffering from a form of literary rachitis, with a disconcerting habit of screaming out the words "Oh Hell!" at a tea-party. But for all her intense artificiality and desolating idiom, she has pep and a sort of brittle facetiousness which may pass for humour, and this is more than can be said for many of her contemporaries. The Symbolists, echoed by Mr. Flecker and the Imagists, chaperoned by Mr. Pound, with their external objectivism and their air of novelty, attempted a brilliant reaction against all these lamentable small girl yodelings and sniffings, this meretricious simplicity, this horri-

fying absence of poetic vertebrae, and above all, this boundless and eternal exhibitionism. "Self-expression with no self worth expressing," as a gifted young novelist, Miss Rose Macaulay, who also writes poetry, has put it. She goes on:

That is just what we should not do with ourselves—express them. We should train them, educate them, teach them to think, see that they know something—know it exactly, with no blurred edges, no fogs. And if we see anything, we should say it concisely, without eloquence and frills.

It is, as the French say, a point of view; it is almost a poetic program. But where would a goodly proportion of latter-day Anglo-Saxon poets be, if they had not triumphed precisely through the exploitation of blurred edges and fogs; where would their Latin brethren be without false eloquence and frills? If certain of our gifted younger lyricists really want to know what good poetry is, let them read again the following examples, selected, we admit, in enormous haste and very much at random:

At the last tenderly,
From the walls of the powerful fortress'd
house,
From the clasp of the knitted locks, from
the keep of the well-closed doors,
Let me be wafted.

Let them glide noiselessly forth;
With the key of softness unlock the locks
—with a whisper
Set ope the doors O Soul!

Tenderly—Be not impatient,
(Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,
Strong is your hold O love.)

And these verses by M. Nicholas Beauduin, despite their juvenility and trickiness, strike us as good poetry:

Je te voudrais	très douce
	lasse un peu
avec 7 pavots sombres dans tes cheveux	
Tu serais comme un demi jour	
sensible	triste
au double ton de jade et d'améthyste.	

Tu me caresserais avec douceur
 longuement lentement
 comme en cadence
 7 fois au moins par $\frac{1}{2}$ heure

PALME D'ARGENT DANS LE SILENCE

Et moi je resterais devant tes yeux
 desperdument
 tes cher grands yeux si beaux à voir
 comme si je songeais devant 2 soleils noirs.

And this from Strato:

I have crowned with ten supple filets the
 victorious athlete, the son of Anticles; three
 times I have kissed him, all soiled with
 blood. But the savour of his blood was
 dearer to me than a perfume from Smyrna.

And this, also by an unknown poet:

Put away, put away, O Time, the years
 from Dyonisius! but if, deserting me, he be-
 long to another, let the myrtle of yesterday
 be swept out with the crumbs of the table.

And this from an anonymous hand
 which has been dust for five hundred
 years or more:

O western wind, when wilt thou blow
 That the small rain down can rain.
 Christ, that my love were in my arms
 And I in my bed again!

We do not claim that any of these ex-
 amples are remarkable for an absence of
 egoism, but the difference between their
 poignant sincerity and the temper
 which reigns in the anthologies should
 be obvious to anyone. Let us make no
 mistake; there is less reason why lyric
 poetry, as it is commonly practiced and
 understood at present, should not dis-
 appear utterly from the earth than me-
 diaeval illumination or XIII Century
 stained glass. But insofar as it merits
 to be remembered and loved, it is mem-
 orable and lovable for the qualities we
 have suggested in the above quotations
 —laughter and hatred, pity and disgust,
 the pain of impending dissolution, plea-
 sure, physical sensation and desire—
 spontaneously expressed by those who,
 first of all, are really capable of feeling

these things, and then of singing them,
 “without eloquence or frills.” There is
 something profoundly *unnatural*, some-
 thing indecent, in the incessant hand-
 ling and fingering of paltry emotions
 and petty moods which has crept into so
 much of our poetry within the last three
 decades. It is a malady similar to that
 of the abuse of “scruples” on the part
 of a pettifogging Catholic; to employ
 the *mot juste* of M. Tzara, it is “a pri-
 vate bell for inexplicable needs.” We
 believe there is no exaggeration in say-
 ing that the pet preoccupations of at
 least one-half of our modern poets, ma-
 jor and minor, from any conceivable
 standpoint of interest to God or man,
 simply do not exist. Apart from lust
 and pity, the material beauty of the
 world, and death and religion thrown in
 for those who enjoy contemplating them,
 the rest is literature, as Verlaine said.

We know that we are skimming above
 the subject in a much too remote and
 rapid manner; for instance, we have
 said nothing about *Unanimisme* or the
 sentiment for crowds on the part of
 those born solitaries who secretly hold
 them in horror. Nor about *Dynamisme*
 or the cult of steel genitals (*vide* Kip-
 ling) which seems, in France, to have
 congealed into the parvenu astonish-
 ment of the profiteer who has just
 bought an automobile, or the sterility
 of those who, being without love, culti-
 vate a lascivious sentiment for machines.
 This singular fetichism fills us, we con-
 fess, with a very moderate interest, but
 we have said nothing either about the
 poetry of propaganda and revolution,
 which interests us extremely, for the
 good reason that it seems to exist no-
 where, unless perhaps in the land of the
 Soviets.

We are too enamoured of our own time not to be keenly concerned with its aesthetic psychology and production. At the same time, not being very Dada, we look back, sometimes regretfully, to less introspective epochs. The age of the Tudors, for instance, and that of the Greek Anthology, usually regarded by pudic pundits as a decadent period, did not know the reactions which fill with a febrile and somewhat unreal delight the little young men of our time. Meleager and Strato cared infinitely about the beauty of mere language; they were more concerned with form than the most meticulous of modern sonneteers, while their racial psychology and good sense made them every bit as conscious that "all these fair things are vain" as

M. Henri de Regnier or the most Dada of Dadaists. Their cosmos lacked the thrilling loveliness of the Rolls-Royce, and psychoanalysis, and the Russian ballet; even the pictures of M. Picabia and the cream pies of Chaplin might, we say it with regret, have left them cold. But over and above these things, happy or boring, beautiful or absurd, there was one that these barbarians ignored, and which might well exclude them from the contemporary Pantheon. They had never heard that they had a soul to exploit to the tune of fifty cents a line. Whether they were happy because soulless, or soulless because happy, is a problem which must be decided by the people who seem to enjoy these scholastic distinctions.

Not to a Temple Dancer

By GLENN WARD DRESBACH

Not to a temple dancer
 In leopard skin and gold
 Were given temple secrets—
 But all of them she told!

The wise men, in the temple,
 Found nothing they could say,
 But each looked at the other
 And then each looked away.

And not to Love is given
 The wisest words men scrawl
 In temples of their yearning—
 But Love has said all!

Prologue to "Theodora"

By PADRAIC COLUM

The scene is laid in Constantinople, then Capital of the East Roman Empire.

(Two Monks of the desert enter. One is a youth and the other is a man in middle life. They carry empty baskets, which are for sale.)

YOUNGER MONK

Behold our duties are that we stand in the streets of the City and offer our baskets for sale. And further—brother—you were instructed to repress in me all inclination towards my idle interest in worldly affairs.

ELDER MONK

(Who stands with his head bowed.)

I have come here and I have brought you here because of the will of my flesh.

YOUNGER MONK

How so, brother?

ELDER MONK

I have come here for what of all reasons is the most profane.

YOUNGER MONK

Why have we come to this place, brother?

ELDER MONK

Because I would look on the house of a woman.

YOUNGER MONK

Is it so, brother?

ELDER MONK

I would look on the house of the woman who was called Theodora.

YOUNGER MONK

I know the name of Theodora. Yes, when I was studying rhetoric in this City her name was spoken of by many. It was said that those who loved virtue shunned contact with her when she appeared in the streets.

And one day I was met by a crowd of students from my own City and they drew me into the Theatre. Then I saw this Theodora. She played the part of a young slave-girl who is beaten and who weeps for the beating. She seemed to me most innocent and young. And in those days I had acquaintance with a young man, who, they said, was a lover of this Theodora. This young man was called Stephanas.

ELDER MONK

(Putting his sleeves across his face),

Stephanàs—Stephanas!

YOUNGER MONK

But this young man was murdered before I left the City. And at that time there was a man who was very much spoken of. He was given a Government in Africa and Theodora, they said, went with him. The man was called Hecabolus. But you, my brother, have not repressed my inclination to speak of these vain things.

ELDER MONK

I am that Hecabolus that was spoken of. Theodora went with me indeed. But she went because she wished to leave a City that had become hateful to her because of the death of Stephanas. And while she was with me I was jealous of this dead man. I know the torments that belong to the love of the flesh and the cruelties that go with it. I was cruel to her and she fled from me. Then she lived in Chalcedon modestly and piously as those whom I sent to spy on her reported to me. But because of this modesty I was the more tormented, thinking to myself it was because of her love for that dead man that Theodora lived in such manner. Such are some of the torments that belong to the love of the flesh.

YOUNGER MONK

Greatly has Satan tormented you, brother.

ELDER MONK

My eyes are worn with weeping.

YOUNGER MONK

Perhaps some grace has been given the woman.

ELDER MONK

Perhaps. She returned to Constantinople and lived in the manner she had lived in Chalcedon.

(Bitterly).

It is said that he who is to be Emperor—

YOUNGER MONK

Brother, pray!

ELDER MONK

(With restraint).

That he who is to be Emperor, even Justinian, has found in her a spirit and understanding that might counsel his rule.

*(He puts his sleeves across his face
and stands with his head bowed).*

YOUNGER MONK

The Adversary has gained upon you, my brother. But had you been faithful what a reward might have been yours. For our Superior sent us

from the desert into the City to sell these baskets, putting, as we have since discovered, an exorbitant price upon them. And this to test our humility. The people mocked us all day. For me it has been a trial. But for you in this City that saw your greatness and your pride, how great a trial it must have been! And had you been faithful through all the hours how great would have been your reward!

ELDER MONK

For this, torment upon torment and abasement beneath abasement!

YOUNGER MONK

We live in your example, brother. We saw you carry on your back the dust of our cells.

ELDER MONK

Brother, forgive me for having shown you so much corruption.

YOUNGER MONK

I will pray for you. And now we go back to the desert with our baskets unsold. In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost!

ELDER MONK

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost!

(The two Monks disappear).

Emperor T'ang--Skeptic

By PAUL ELDRIDGE

Closer than my body's shadow
Follows the blind nameless One,
Carrying in his tightened, yellow fist
Time, the thin spluttering candle,
And in his swollen cheeks
Death, the grey wind.
So fill and re-fill my deep, golden horn
With the strongest wine,
O wise men of China,
Before declaiming in magnificent verse
My immortality,
That I may nod,
My eyes glittering with dreams,
And believe...

The Precious Rage

By MATTHEW JOSEPHSON

THE room was in something less than twilight when the rapping of the *bonne* awoke them, although it was nearly noon. The shuttered windows threw back the light oppressively. Sunday! What a twisted sleep it had been!

They drew themselves softly from sleep, as mermaids lift themselves from the sand with the green weed and the sea-slime dripping. The tender vibrations of the flesh which still tingled naively bound them with onerous cables. Their ebbing resources were not merely powerless, but too easily induced into honorable and luxurious defeat.

He was the first to make a vaporous motion. And all the forces of the air and the morning laughed his wan gesture back. His arm waved fruitlessly about and then sought again a deliciousness secured from all negation and uncertainty... But he was clearly frightened, and managed to convey to his bed-fellow across the mists distorting and thinning his messages, what a predicament enclosed them. Even such feeble communications of despair as reached the muted brain beside him, awakened, at length, a responsive panic...

"Do you want to have your coffee?" he groaned.

"No, I want to sleep," and she whispered something drowsily that made him clamber up, go to the door and tell the wrinkled lady, that it was not worth the trouble to arrange the room, that Madame had a headache and would rest in bed during the morning. Then he plunged back and tried to doze off. He sought unconsciousness and non-being.

It was like pulling at a crazy sheet which slipped off at one end as soon as he got the other over him.

When the final berceuse has been sung over the senses, and they are lulled and persuaded into helplessness, the mind arises in fever and seizing upon some shabby pattern of the wallpaper, wanders resistlessly through monstrous thoroughfares... Then, by a sudden wrench, he calms himself, and shutting his eyes, regards his confused environment, like the man who, in the singing darkness of a dungeon, can say: "*I will* that these walls do not exist!"

The beauty of being thrown utterly upon the naked consciousness, when all the limbs and their senses have been ruined by Delilah...

He tasted the pleasure of such a state, clinging with it to the sympathetic influence of the semi-dark chamber. The sensation became intense, now rose in waves, as to the apex of a fugue, when all the voices have marched into a final unison... He relaxed. Then he was swept away in a rush of impressions, sensuous experiences of the past, to which he yielded himself wantonly and passively, and from which he had retained the clear after-glow as booty.

It was with such a rapture that he loved to gaze at a diamond crystal, held in a strong light, scattering the colors of the prism about it. In such a mood he loved to taste of Mallarmé. Then, he of the kaleidesopic mind cried out to his treasures, "I am your idle plaything, and I am your prince, at once!"

Pills of the Devil! A sharp pain attacked his chest, and he was thrown

back into his miserable fleshly milieu, in this vale of tears. He suffered physical pain, and as he suffered, his mind struggled and panted in a perfect ferment of precise cogitations. It slanted into every aspect of his day-lit life. It wound into every private lust, every sequestered slight or vanity. "We must be reverent, we must approach our experiences, in a spirit of calm and continence... so that afterward the adventure is purified in the limpid memory..."

He thought of a friend, who lurched brutally and passionately through a gnarled life, and sighed at his importunities.

"I shall have to take a firm stand with X—. I may as well admit that he has caused me more mental discomfiture than anything else. He is intolerant, sets up idols endowed with his own irregularities, laments their lack of symmetry, and proceeds to round off the sharp corners, making deeper gashes as he works on, and never attaining any final smoothness... I am not objecting to his futile occupations. But why should he object to mine?"

"He has even kept me in a state of uncertainty regarding my own designs. Something in his manner has led me to play the fool and break up the nice mechanism of my own constructions so that he might laugh at me. It is wrong. But how can one secure a recognition of justice on his part... And yet I feel that it might not be vain now. My certitudes are stronger, my convictions more vivid than they have ever been before..."

By sufficient exertion of his will, he would sift through all barriers in the most pervasive manner, doors, walls, prejudices... He felt pain at the thought of this man, who had contempt

undisguised for him. He would go toward him. His head felt lighter and lighter...

He arose from bed again, walked to the window, and threw open the shutters. There was only the palely distilled light of a foggy day, which came without shock. He stood up on the window sill, stepped on the iron grill, stretched out his arms and smiled. In his yellow silk pajamas and red bath slippers, he was very real an apparition. He bounded down lightly and was off in the direction of his friend's!

The way led through a broad avenue, along the melancholy high wall of a hospital. The Sunday noises and the Sunday pedestrians were abroad. He passed along, yielding to his old passion for unrelated detail. He heard a child playing five-finger exercises somewhere above the street, and paused to say to himself, "I shall commit suicide on a Sunday, later..." He observed an old street whose houses leaned over toward each other at an unachieved angle of comradeship. He passed one corner where an old building had recently been torn down, so that the curved tracings of all its chimneys left sinister scars in the neighboring wall. He looked up with delight at the army of twisted chimneys above the roofs, strode through pools of slime, iridescent with oil and putrescent refuse.

"Precious minutiae!" he exclaimed. The impressive disparity of each one of these things to the other! What a fearfully pluralistic city! One *should* be reverent. One should not commit oneself.

Then he had suddenly felt a sensation of hunger.

"I must fortify myself," he murmured, and he stopped at a cafe, and

drank chocolate, without paying for it or even being molested with regard to his extraordinary costume. Uncanny world! He had also taken of a little flower girl, a knot of November violets, which he had inserted in the buttonhole of his pyjama-coat, at his chest.

This was the way to his friend's house, through mean streets, and at length up five flights of stairs, of which each presented a severely different odor. He opened the door, which was unbolted, and stepped in. His friend was brushing his teeth briskly. He was half-dressed, and the lather of his toothpaste spread an exaggerated grimace about his mouth.

"Hello," the man exclaimed, "I was just thinking about you this morning."

The man in pyjamas walked up and down the little room—it was the kitchen—regarding the back of his friend, who continued to brush his teeth, until the sacrament reached its logical completion. His steps had become more nervous, more rigidly poised. His piercing eyes burning meanwhile toward the back of his friend. He spoke at length. . . .

"My dear John, I have been thinking over what we said last Thursday. I withdraw my support from the conclusions we agreed upon then. I had meant to approach you from an entirely different direction. To me you are in the position of the being who worships a golden calf, then destroys that, substitutes a jade idol, wearies of that, then a wooden phallus, consumes that, and thus ad infinitum, ending ultimately with the chagrin of having no Gods, of not having tested enough, and of having wasted sufficient energy to create a Roman Empire. Life experiences you, rather than you life.

"You are not reverent enough, plunge

at things, tear, crunch, gulp, my friend. Thus you relinquish yourself, have loud-mouthed off-spring, involve yourself in duties, accept some of them, renounce others, fume, sweat. . . . And yet there are others, who do not rush from one credo to another and from one temperament to another, and for whose balanced faculties the ensemble and the nuance at once are never lost."

His friend gazed at him silently with eyes flaming as from cadaverous sockets, then folding his arms over his chest, he shouted in a rhythmic chant,

"O Father, O puissant Creator,
May our hearts be Thy sanctuary!

Voices from the living room sounded in chorus, "...the faith in us! Amen! Amen!"

The visitor turned aside with an indifferent shrug.

His friend John returned to a normal crouch and addressed him.

"What chagrin," he said, "devours you, now? You come to me with old fallacies in new dress."

"No, I state, simply, that through coming to grips with isolated experiences in the subjective manner which you hold to, that you cannot make pure judgments."

"Then it is a question of epistemology, again."

"No, Heaven forbid!"

"Yes, yes," his friend retorted impatiently, "I am at one end receiving a distorted idea of my experience, through too intimate relations with it, you at the other end looking at it through a field glass, and ratiocinating; with the truth somewhere between. But as between my difficulties, your position is one of neither fish nor fowl, neither Heaven nor Hell. You are conscious of no one

experience intensely enough to receive its message. I am not interested in composing a thesaurus of all the notable sensations in this fleeting world. I want to penetrate somehow to the few real meanings, on which a man can peg his whole life."

"But you are unpoised. You approach an idea brutally, *en face*, instead of from a confiding angle. You bring to bear upon it all your regrettable prejudices."

"And do you not cling to your niche? Why, for instance, have you come to assail my creed?"

"I have only differed with it sweetly. I am not deeply concerned. Now that I think of it, since you object to my call, I wonder why I have taken the pains to come here and attempt to assist you."

"As for me, I am not mildly concerned. I differ bitterly with my gods. I forsake one for another. I could not endure consorting polygamously with them all. I attach myself to the new deity with even greater passion, for knowing that I shall renounce him before another twelvemonth. This,—this turbulence, you would call it, I prefer strongly to a career of absorbed Narcissism!"

The man in pyjamas reeled from this last as from a heavy blow. His heart pounded loudly and the blood rushed to his head. Once lift the softening veil, and the blotches and scars are torture to the eyes. The savage pricks maddened him, and he raised his hands at his friend, with a sudden desperate gesture, exclaiming,

"You are all thieves, and schemers, trying to steal my birthright!"

His friend drew back quickly, turning his head sidewise as though to dodge a hand-grenade.

At this juncture, the man's wife entered and said with great severity, "The family are at the table."

"And what is your conclusion, at length," John asked from his corner, with a more genial spirit. He seemed to ignore the presence of his wife.

The man in the yellow pyjamas suddenly became abashed and furtive. His manner suddenly became abstract. He began to hum to himself gravely, and after a time said: "That I am going back to my quarters." . . .

He bounded down the five flights of stairs, almost apoplectic with anxiety to reach his room. He sped along the same tortuous streets. The fog had cleared, and the sun sliced the world into three dimensions again; but a mist had drawn itself about the man's brain; the protective inhibitions spared him the pain of a three-dimensional and irrelevant scene, as he debouched along the street. He sped a tangled course, whistling the while, between tramways and vehicles, blaring posters, public latrines street-lamps.

Reaching his room he gave one quick look out of the window, and laughed hysterically as he banged the shutters closed and pulled at the blinds. It was dark and there was a grateful fusion of identities again.

Sunday!

He stretched out in a big chair and looked at his funny red-leather slippers. Then the whole film of the last twenty minutes' experiences began to crackle, and finally spattered before him into ten thousand little segments. His eyes assumed a gentle and reminiscent look. He sat still for a long time, and then began to hum softly to himself:

"I am lonely, lonely. . ."

William Vaughn Moody

An American Milton

By HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

WILLIAM Vaughn Moody is our American Milton. This is not to say that he is Milton, but it is a phrase which points to his accomplishment and his style, and places him with sufficient exactness in relation to the evolutionary Deity whom he sang in the grand manner, lavished by the elder poet on a Calvinistic devil and an operatic God. And as Milton ends the renaissance in British verse, being the last great scholar who fused his scholarship with his inspiration, and compelled his readers to be scholars, too; so Moody comes at the end of an American tradition which begins with Bryant and includes the New England poets, and is, like the man he so patiently studied, an immensely learned poet, laying vast provinces of literature under tribute, and alluding indifferently to Aeschylus and Dante and the Bible and mediaeval romance and contemporary politics. Milton is the crown and flower of Anglican puritanism; Moody sublimates the finer part of the American attitude.

The temper of contemporary verse just now is alien to Moody, who is not likely to receive a fair appraisal of his genius in our generation. I have heard him called the last of the complicated poets, and to-day we have gone in for an exaggerated and artificial simplicity. He is not quite the last of the complicated poets; one remembers the queer audacities of Edwin Arlington Robinson, but he is our last great scholar

poet, and nowadays to be scholarly in poetry is to be damned. Indeed, our versifiers are so fearful of being mannered, that many of them are bad-mannered. This is very odd. We have had poetry of the soul—with Poe; and poetry of the body—with Whitman; but it remained for our day to produce poetry of the solar plexus. With us men seek to astonish by writing below the belt. But as such eccentricities are but the detritus of a movement which is fundamentally sound, it is the more interesting that none of the present-day critics has seen how much of contemporary verse is implicit in Moody. They have cried up Whitman instead, largely, I think, because their French and British masters have cried him up before them. They have forgotten that any poetic movement is an orchestral piece, not a solo on the saxophone; they ignore the comparative claims of Field and Riley and Richard Hovey and Bliss Carman and above all, Moody,—men who really accomplished more toward the re-birth of poetry in the United States than did Whitman with all his genius.

Whitman was a very great spirit; he was perhaps also a great poet; but when one asks precisely how much the contemporary poetic movement owes to him, the answer is not so easy as one would think. Free verse comes out of him—in part; but in a very roundabout manner; and it is hard to see what the imagists owe to the most diffuse of

poets, or why our versifying contemporaries would not write much as they do now if Whitman had lived and died in London, let us say, rather than on Long Island. Men in 1870 dared not sing of American life; now they dare not sing of anything else; but I do not clearly see how Whitman is responsible for this peripeteia. He grappled with life; he was a yes-sayer; he chanted democracy; he illustrated what he had to say with reference to Manahatta and the Civil War; but he remains a universal, not a local, poet, even yet more highly admired out of America than in it.

Whitman did not sing of Pilot Knob or the ol' swimmin' hole as Riley did; or of Waller Lot as Field did; he did not sing of Dartmouth as Hovey did; or of Glynn County as Lanier did; or of Gloucester Moors as Moody did. He sang of democracy, but democracy (perhaps with sound instinct) will have none of him. "There was little," writes Professor Boynton, "of what is usually regarded as national aspiration in Whitman's feeling for race and national evolution." But does not the way to "The Town Down River" and "North of Boston" and the "Santa Fé Trail" and "Spoon River" lie rather through Pilot Knob than through the opaque mysticism of the chants democratic? Whitman did much, but between the generation of Richard Stoddard and the generation of Carl Sandburg there is something else. That something is localism. Whitman affirms life; Moody affirms American life; and therein, it seems to me, lies the pregnant difference.

I repeat that Whitman is a great genius, a powerful general influence in shaping our socialized literature, but I do not see that his pungent egoism has

done for American verse all that many claim. I think, indeed, that the claims advanced for Whitman as the saviour of our poetry are frequently put forth by people who do not clearly understand the problem of American verse. According to these people this problem is to avoid writing like Lowell and Longfellow: the New Englanders, writes Mr. Untermeyer, were "scarcely American at all but for their *habitat*"; "they were English provincial poets," says Amy Lowell. Now the real problem is precisely the opposite—it is to avoid writing like Whitman and to write as much as possible like Longfellow and Lowell. Let us look at the facts.

Before the Civil War our best verse came home to men's business and bosoms because it was definitely provincial in theme and in intention, remote and "un-American" as subject and treatment may seem to the rebels of to-day. Bryant paints the American landscape, putting into it American water-fowls, the fringed gentian and the apple-tree, bob-o'-links and Rhode Island coal. Emerson's poems are homely with Yankee shrewdness, and he writes of the Concord bridge, of Webster, of the rhodora, of the Musketaquid river and the Maine woods, of the founders of Concord as in that bit of verse which begins abruptly:

"Bulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Homer, Mer-
riam, Flint,"

thus, by anticipation, parodying Mr. Masters. Longfellow, the best abused of our poets, gave us "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha" and "Miles Standish" and "Tales of the Wayside Inn," thoroughly representative of the way of looking at life in his day as

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;
How is it I extract strength from the
beef I eat?

is not. Whittier is as local as Burns, and Lowell, if he wrote "The Vision of Sir Launfal," probably the worst poem ever written by a good craftsman, yet created Parson Wilbur and Hosea Bigelow.* To say that all this is not definitely American poetry is merely to say that it is not the American poetry of today.

Turn now to the poets who write after the Civil War, and note their curious refusal to be in any way American. Some, like Aldrich and H. C. Bunner, retire into the process of art itself; adopting a mild Parnassianism, they polish their quatrains into chilly effectiveness and so forget the United States. Sidney Lanier, like Gilder, flees into music, expressing his dissatisfaction at an industrialized civilization in the vague generalities of "The Symphony" with its hysterical denunciation of "trade." Others, like Emily Dickinson and E. R. Sill, become enamored of introspection and brood over their souls with the affection of doctors for a new and interesting disease. Another group seeks refuge in the charms of geography; we have a whole company of volumes, captained by Bayard Taylor's "Poems of the Orient," and including Stedman's "Songs of the Caribbean"; Stoddard's "Book of the East" with its "Persian songs," "Tartar songs," "Arab songs," and "Chinese songs," all manufactured, like curios, in New York City; John B. O'Reilly's "Songs of the Southern Seas,"; and Aldrich's dreamy pic-

tures of Ispahan and the "flower of the harem, Rose-In-Bloom." We needed to be rescued from this inanity, and it is not so much Whitman as it is the local color group, of which Moody was by far the most powerful member, who brought us to salvation.

Local color, however, is not literature. Moody transcended local color when the rest were absorbed in it. He was, as I think, a genius; and he realized in his work the truth of Lowell's quaint figure:

All great poetry must smack of the soil, for it must be rooted in it, but it must do so with the aspiring instinct of the pine that climbs upward, and not in the grovelling fashion of the potato.

Moody is a greater artist than Riley or Hovey because he never mistook parochialism for reality. The local color idea served merely to orient him, to make him aware of America and of the moral issue of American life. This moral issue, which was the eternal moral issue, between spiritual sloth and spiritual struggle, Lanier, on the whole, fled from, but Moody faced it, as Lowell faced it before him. And being a far different man from his predecessor, he translated that issue, not into terms of a decayed mysticism (as in Lowell's "Endymion"), but into the eternal terminology of beauty. Contrast "The Present Crisis" and "An Ode in Time of Hesitation;" it is the difference between Teddy Roosevelt and Marcus Aurelius. And while the neo-realists are groping about in the sub-cellars of Freudian psychology, or losing themselves in the raw mists of a post-dated sentimentalism, Moody said all there is to say on sex in "I Am The Woman," and on the ma-

* Damaged, according to Mr. Untermeyer by a "dialect that is most theatrical and often misrepresentative." Alas, this was before the days of Mencken.

chine process in "The Brute." In these he translates time into eternity, and that is why he is a genius and not, like most of his contemporaries, a man of talent only.

He had like Milton a gift for political issues, and he wrote better poetry about them. With both men patriotism is synonymous with righteousness; the "two-headed weapon at the door" is the very weapon of Moody when he writes:

Blindness we may forgive, but baseness
we will smite.

Moody, like Milton, sets his face against the overwhelming political drift of his day, rebuking "manifest destiny" imperialists as Milton rebuked the cavaliers, and making, like Dante, a party by himself. He becomes genuine and American thereby, just as his contemporaries were often genuine but local, and so he sublimates the "square deal" into enduring verse much as Dante gives us the quintessence of Catholic ethics.

Moody is, indeed, the only American who has sung grandly of God. His great trilogy, unfinished but colossal, is unique in our literature. Perhaps it ranks with the very highest reaches of imaginative metaphysical poetry anywhere. At any rate, what have we to put beside this gold and marble, that will not seem like plaster in comparison? There is Longfellow's "Christus", but the subject is too deep and vast for the powers of its creator. There are the Launcelot and Guenevere dramas of Hovey—like his, they are unfinished; like his, they attempt a large reading of life; but, except for certain scenes, they are artificial and unreal, and their symbolism is frequently spectacular, not poetic. No, Moody is not with these,

he is with Shelley, he is with Aeschylus, and he is with Milton above all.

Indeed, he rivals Milton on his own ground; in fearless handling of a vast subject; in the ease and eloquence of his mighty line, so seldom derivative, so often splendid; in the cosmic sweep of his imagination; in the literally universal meaning of his theme; even in his defects—perhaps unavoidable with such subjects—such as the substitution of grandiosity for grandeur, the fondness for saying a thing indirectly when it could be better said directly, the frequent pedantry, and alas! occasional *preciosité* of style. Like Milton he relieves his epic theme with domestic touches. And where Milton fails, Moody succeeds; that is, in the handling of a supernatural struggle among gods and angels, for the scenes of the battle subsequent to the last judgment are in Moody at once vague enough to avoid absurdities, and grand enough to be imaginatively satisfying, as the Miltonic warfare is not. Where Moody fails is in the creation of character. He describes character, but he does not create it, save in the case of Eve. But all his women—Pyrrha, Pandora, Abdera (I am tempted to add Raphael) are Eve. His Greeks and his archangels are mainly names. Cain just escapes into life. Moody has no Satan, and Satan is the heart of "Paradise Lost." Indeed, Moody has no God that is definite and dramatic like Milton's Deity, who may be an Oriental despot, but who is never blurred, whereas, as Mr. Manly writes of Moody, "God figures ambiguously in his poetry."

Yet this very ambiguity is American, for it arises out of Moody's unwillingness to admit defeat. The puritan takes a gloomy satisfaction in the fact that

some of us are going to be damned; Moody takes a glorious satisfaction in the fact that some of us are going to be saved, but to save us, he is compelled to be vague about God. One can call his attitude optimism, but the word has been cheapened, and I think it is more nearly accurate to say that he is full of a gay and cosmic impudence toward the Almighty, which even the sober stateliness of his blank verse fails to conceal. There is, a fine, a direct relation between Kipling's famous estimate of the American spirit and the matter of these poetic dramas.

For as "Paradise Lost" may be bad philosophy but great poetry, so Moody's trilogy in not being consistent, is yet the finer verse. Its very logomachies and intellectual confusion; its mixture of pagan and puritan, scientist and mystic; its jaunty disregard of chronology, whereby Eve comes last and Prometheus first and the last judgment in the middle; its invincible conviction that life matters to the universe; its defiance of God's will, whether in the Valley of Jehosaphat or in the Garden of Eden; its firm faith in a mystic exaltation of femininity—this jumble of myth and science, of creeds and things, which is somehow not a jumble but a beautiful and splendid dream of God,—there is here the sublimation of the American spirit:

Enslaved, illogical, elate,
He greets the embarrassed Gods, nor fears
To shake the iron hand of Fate
Or match with Destiny for beers.

Half blasphemous as the phrase may seem, Moody is really the cosmic play-boy of the western world. Here is young America, half out of Harvard, half out of Chicago, with his feet on

Darwin and molecular physics, and his head in a cloud of stars. He telescopes the mythologies, and flings aeons about as the stromomers do. He sets in motion the mighty machinery of Revelations, only to find fault with it because it has no place for the robin and the snail. He scurries past panteism into mysticism, and back again into Spinoza. He re-invents the lost drama of Aeschylus and improves on the book of Genesis and—last and loveliest audacity—sends Eve back into the Garden to tell the Lord that he was totally in the wrong!

Behold, against thy will, against thy word,
Against the wrath and warning of thy sword,
Eve has been Eve, O Lord!
A pitcher filled, she comes back from the brook,
A wain she comes, laden with mellow ears;
She is a roll inscribed, a prophet's book
Writ strong with characters.
Behold, Eve willed it so; look, if it be so, look!

Knew'st Thou not Eve, who broughtest her to birth?
Searcher of breast and reins,
Thou should'st have searched thy Woman, the seed-pod of thine earth!

Herself hath searched her softly through and through;
Singing she lifts her full soul up to view;
Lord, do Thou praise it, too!

And this is the woman of whom we read in Genesis that the Lord said:

I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Who but an American would correct the Almighty in such fashion as Moody does? He inverts Milton's famous line:

He for God only, she for God in him,

for it is Eve, it is Pandora, who are in the secret places of the Lord. Surely

this is Americanese translated into language beyond Mr. Mencken's ken! Surely this is the transcendental spiritual swagger! And yet it does not matter, it passes somehow into the most passionate and beautiful and thoughtful verse, poetry unparalleled, as I believe, in the literary history of the United States.

The guiding thread through these immense and difficult masques (for such they are) is not difficult to find or follow. The general ethical and poetic scheme has been so clearly set forth in Mr. Manly's admirable introduction that it is useless to restate what he says:

The central or dominant thought of the trilogy is the inseparableness, and, in a certain sense, the unity of God and man. This thought is set forth in the first member, "The Fire-Bringer," through the reaction on the human race of the effort of Prometheus to make man independent of God; in the second member, "The Masque of Judgment," through a declaration of the consequence to God himself, that would inevitably follow his decree for the destruction of mankind; in the third member, "The Death of Eve," it was intended to set forth the impossibility of separation, the complete unity of the Creator and creation.

The likeness of this doctrine to Royce's philosophy of loyalty is too obvious to require comment.

But let us observe another way in which this theme is again American. Here, in a sense, is an aesthetic interpretation of the problem of knowledge. Naturalism (rationalism), theology, mysticism—the three members of the trilogy can be severally referred to these three aspects of truth. Or, to put it another way, we are dealing with science in "The Fire-Bringer"; with theology in "The Masque of Judgment"; and with some far-off, divine event,

some Hegelian resolution of the differences between the two into a higher unity, in "The Death of Eve."

We are to remember that all this is symbolism and not allegory. Nevertheless, I think it is clear that Moody's Prometheus drama is a statement and a criticism in imaginative terms of the processes of science. Note the attempts of Prometheus to bring comfort and light into the world of Pyrrha and Deukalion; the persecution of Deukalion, who stands in the place of constituted authority and is half a supporter of Prometheus, by the fanatic mob of "natural" men and women; the faith of Pandora, the type of forward-looking spirit, in a work which Prometheus does; the hero's triumph and failure and his mystic phophecies:

O rude and dazed spirits! Ye shall grope
And wonder toward a knowledge and a
grace
That now we dream not of; then loneliness
Shall flee away, and enmity no more
Be spectral in the houses and the streets
Where walk your primal hearts in the
large light
That floods the after-earth.

Out of these stones
I build my rumoring city, baséd deep
On elemental silence; in this soil
I plant my cool vine and my shady tree,
Whose roots shall feed upon the central
fire!

And the mind of man, if it go forward
in knowledge, must, like Prometheus,
suffer and triumph and fail:

A thousand aeons, nailed in pain
On the blown world's plunging prow,
That seeks across the eternal main,—
Down whatever storms we drift,
What disastrous headlands lift,
Festal lips, triumphant brow,
Light us with thy joy, as now!

Note finally the uses to which discovery is put:

Eros, how sweet
 Is the cup of thy drunkenness!
 Dionysus, how our feet
 Hasten to the burning cup
 Thou liftest up!
 But O how sweetest and how most burn-
 ing it is
 To drink of the wine of thy lightsome
 chalices,
 Apollo! Apollo! To-day
 We say we will follow thee and put all
 others away,

Apollo standing for the pride of life
 felt by the liberated intellect. The
 direct consequence of this naturalism is
 depicted in the prelude to the "Masque
 of Judgment":

The cause is here,
 Here in the wild and sinful heart of
 man,—
 Of all the fruits upon creation's vine
 The thirstiest one to drain the vital breast
 Of God, wherein it grows.

Thus it is that human knowledge is
 somehow always being debased, yet
 goes forward, and yet again never satis-
 fies the hungry heart of man.

The more familiar matter of "The
 Masque of Judgment" contains equally
 searching comment upon the inadequa-
 cies of orthodox religion as a guide and
 prophet of life, a comment which rises,
 in the picture of the Valley of Judgment,
 to a wild and Dantesque splendor, cul-
 minating in the frightful appearance
 of the Worm as he wars against heaven:

He lays his length upward the visioned
 hills,
 The inviolable fundamentals of Heaven!
 There where he climbs the kindled slopes
 grow pale,
 Ashen the amethystine dells, and dim
 The starry reaches...

In vain the Lion ramps against the tide,
 In vain from slope to slope the giant
 Wraths
 Rally but to be broken. Dwindling dim
 Across the blackened pampas of the wind
 The routed Horses flee with hoof and
 wing,
 Till their trine light is one, and now is
 quenched.

This disaster falls upon high heaven
 because God proceeds against his crea-
 tion, not in love, but in judgment, the
 error being marked by the complete ab-
 sence of woman from "The Masque of
 Judgment." It is only when Eve creeps
 back to the Garden that love once more
 finds out God. Love is at once sensuous
 and Platonic, it is Pandora and Ra-
 phael, so that Raphael, the poet-angel,
 appropriately comments upon the event:

Would He had spared
 That dark Antagonist whose enmity
 Gave Him rejoicing sinews, for of Him
 His foe was flesh of flesh and bone
 of bone,
 With suicidal hand He smote him down,
 And now indeed His lethal pangs begin.

a passage which leads us straight back
 to Josiah Royce.

American churches have not yet done
 talking about the conflict of science and
 religion. Well, here is the conflict of
 science and religion glorified past the
 recognition of the churches. For Moody
 is keen enough to see that there is no
 real "conflict" between reason and in-
 tuition; there is, instead, a mutual de-
 pendency, a mutual inadequacy. In the
 third member of the trilogy he was to
 resolve this inadequacy, this "conflict,"
 if such it be, in a fashion of his own, a
 mystic manner not unlike Ibsen's Third
 Kingdom, not to speak of Mr. Shaw's
 more recent pilgrimage to Delphi. The
 prophecy of this resolution is found in
 the poem, "The Death of Eve" (writ-
 ten earlier than the one act that is ex-
 tant of the masque) and in Pandora's
 song in "The Fire-Bringer":

I stood within the heart of God;
 It seemed a place that I had known;
 (I was blood-sister to the clod,
 Blood-brother to the stone).

I found my love and labor there,
My house, my raiment, meat and wine,
My ancient rage, my old despair,—
Yea, all things that were mine.

.

Then suddenly in my own heart
I felt God walk and gaze about;
He spoke; His words seemed held apart
With gladness and with doubt.

"Here is my meat and wine," He said,
"My love, my toil, my ancient care;
Here is my cloak, my book, my bed,
And here my old despair. . ."

Long before Wells, it is evident,
Moody was proclaiming God the Invisible King. And as Lona Hessel stands at the threshold of Ibsen's revolutionary masterpieces to "let in light and air," so Pandora-Eve is at length to usher in the completion of the evolutionary God.

We have not, however, said enough when we say that Moody poetized an evolutionary universe, until we realize that his American temper makes him, like Royce, a kind of happier Schopenhauer, in whose system the will to live has as its destiny to become intelligent:

These stirred in Him, demanding to be
dowered
With individual shape and destiny,—
Each one a soul, yet each incorporate
With his great soul, which to far happy
ends
Should henceforth in a million shapes
of will
Immensely groan and travail, not with
tears
Alone, but laughter, with singing as
with sobs.
Oh, many a golden station on that march

Lie backward of us! when the armed
worlds
Broke leaguer 'round some conquered
capital,
And the pleasure-places of its kings
Sat down to feast, the unhelmed glee-
men chanting
Victory past and victory to come. . .
Man's violence was earnest of his
strength,
His sin a heady overflow, dynamic
Unto all lovely uses, to be curbed
And sweetened, never broken with the
rod!

Until God and man see this truth
together, it must be that

naked from their seats,
The stars arise with lifted hands, and wait.

Poets and women are the prophets
to whom the secret is confided, which is
to say that, as in Shelley, the golden
age will arise only out of creative art
and intuitive love. Pandora, who is
love, comments upon the progress of
Prometheus; Raphael, who is creative
art, comments upon God; and both (as
Moody writes elsewhere) might well
exclaim:

Heart, we have chosen the better part!
Save sacred love and sacred art,
Nothing is good for long.

And so our American joins hands
with Shelley and with Dante at the last:

Behold a wonder worthy of the rhyme
Of him who from the lowest depth of hell,
Through every paradise and through all
glory,
Love led serene, and who returned to tell
The words of hate and awe; the won-
drous story
How all things are transfigured except
Love.

YOU'LL SAY:

"This was written so long ago!"—
Only by what a little while
Do I anticipate your saying so!

RICHARD KIRK

Solitaire

By EMMY VERONICA SANDERS

IN the evenings I sit and play solitaire.

I light the candle—so as to have the shadows on the wall for company and make things speak to me.

The incandescent globe that is attached to the center of the ceiling I do not like to use. It kills the life of the things in the room—being dead itself. It speaks with the loudness of dead obtrusive weights. In it I cannot hear my thoughts.

When the candle is lit, all things begin to move and whisper. I shuffle the cards—making neat little piles of them.

I play with the cards and with my thoughts. Of my thoughts, too, I make neat little piles—shifting and shifting them.

My thoughts are as silent and swift as shadows on the wall.

Words—the bodies of thoughts—are stiff and inflexible. You cannot alter them, once they are there. They always keep exactly the same shape and weight and color—like the substance of the things from which shadows proceed. But thoughts and the shadows themselves can expand and contract—grow lighter and darker—take on a hundred varying moving shapes.

My hand is only my hand—always.

But the thought of my hand or the shadow it throws on the wall can become anything or nothing, grotesque or beautiful, the size of a pin prick or a gaping monster, I can do whatever I like with it.

My hunch, too, is always there (for I am hunchbacked).

It is always the same protuberance of flesh and bone—never changing size or shape.

Only my thought about it varies.

And if I keep a certain posture and hold the candle in a certain way—and then look at my shadow on the wall—it ceases to be there entirely...

That is why I like the thinking about things better than the things themselves.

It is quite a fortunate circumstance when you are crippled and must earn your living—as I do—by embroidering.

Thinking, too, is a kind of embroidering.

You add little ornaments—flowery figures, glittering stuff, little meandering lines and loops and arabesques—to plain material of a few

facts or a few truths that are either black or white or somewhere in between the black and white.

Thus in the daytime I embroider. At night I shuffle cards and play with shadows. On the whole I am rather content...

And then, when Sunday comes, I read the papers. That almost fills the day.

The picture section shows the people that are *doing* things and *having* things—all over the world.

There are men with beautiful bodies—wrestling on platforms before highborn spectators.

There are men who set out on daring expeditions to far countries.

There are pictures of fine women and their little children—frail and fresh like flowers with the morning sun upon them.

There are strong faces of the owners of magnificent estates and bank accounts. And famous actresses and authors.

There are pictures of assemblies of men governing the fate of nations—and inventors of miraculous machines—and winners of races and contests—women and men.

There are pictures of the people that fill the grand tiers on gala occasions and the grandstands when there are parades.

And also the photographs of happy little pet dogs that win prizes.

In the fat Sunday papers they tell you everything about the people whose bodies and whose souls never were crippled.

I do not envy them.

I see the bodies moving, dancing, posturing—the hands of the speakers lifted and the fierce contortions of the limbs in sporting contests. And the cool smiles of women safely provided for.—I fancy I can hear the words they speak—the little sounds that come out of the soft red cavity that is their mouth.

And I keep wondering about the shadows they would throw in narrow rooms by candle light. How they would dwindle, grow and vacillate and be grotesque—as grotesque as my hunch.

I also wonder what the thoughts are behind the loud bright words they speak—the swift and silent games inside the skull wall—all over and around each little fixed and given fleshy word.

No—I am not dissatisfied.

I earn my living cleanly, stitching gaudy things on black and white.

I have my solitaire.

There are times when my hunch seems a blessing to me. A blessing like all final and unalterable things. Like being in prison or dead. Something about which there is nothing to be done or changed or desired any more.

Those poor people in the Sunday papers must go on desiring and desiring all their lives—the many, many things that are within their reach. There is no finality for them, no resignation.

And then there are those others—that carry a hunch on the back of their souls.

That is not final, either. For they might shake it off—if they only knew how! And so they go on—trying and trying—

But mine is peace—by birthright.

The little shadows know it, too.

They come and play so softly, so silently, along the floor and walls.

They steal on to the table. They never interfere with little games of cards—or thoughts—

"Dixie"

By JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

Fierce, nervous, galloping tune
To which gray armies danced to death,
Bearing a broken flag
As a proud jest, up to the unleashed guns,
You leap into my heart
With flash of dogwood, trills of mockingbirds,
And white magnolia cups
Abrim with light, above dark, glossy leaves.

When I am dead,
Somewhere a band will play you still,
Somewhere a horse will paw the earth and snort,
Somewhere a crowd will start the Rebel Yell.
For in a last long rally,
I, too have fought and failed,
I, too, have followed phantoms of starved hope,
And reeled back broken from the battlefields of Hell.

The Moulin de la Galette

By ARTHUR SYMONS

“**C**ETTE nature ténébreuse, bariolé de vifs éclairs.” This phrase of Baudelaire’s certainly reveals one of the dominant qualities in Lautrec’s genius. Also: “*Peut-être nos nerfs trop délicates, ne peuvent-ils plus supporter un symbole trop clairement redoutable.*” Delicacy of nerves: that must invariably be found mixed unequally with the more strenuous nerves of great artists; nor is there any great artist who did not possess among other possessions a love of the Horrible: found equally in Poe, the Prince of Mystery, the Priest of the Horrible, as in Baudelaire, the most nervous of modern writers, who believed imperturbably in the natural wickedness of man: for are we not all *nés marqués pour le mal*? Lautrec also had a love, in fact an abnormal passion, for the Horrible; which induced him not only to frequent the Moulin-Rouge and to paint it, but also to haunt and to paint le Moulin de la Galette. This is one reason why I spent one of my nights when I was in Paris in June, 1920, in the Moulin de la Galette.

Avid always for nocturnal adventures, I explored that peculiar quarter one night. I found, not far from la Butte: “*Moulin de la Galette, 71 Rue Lépic. Bal: Mardis, Jeudis, Samedis. Tous les Dimanches et Fêtes, à deux heures. Soirée à huit heures.*” On the night when I went there I strolled along the Boulevard Rochechouart where I felt somewhat nervous as I found myself on that infamous middle pavement of the boulevard, the usual trail of the Prosti-

tutes and of the Criminals. I saw more evil women and more evil men on that night than those which Lautrec painted in the Moulin. They were utterly degraded, revolting, brutal, offensive, vicious, vile. They trailed along that dusty boulevard as they have always trailed, year in, year out.

I took my turn, got my ticket. I had to leave my stick in the *vestiàire*. I found printed on the pale yellow ticket: “*Moulin de la Galette, Montmartre, 77, 79 et 81 rue Lépic, Paris. Entrée, Prix: 4 francs. Tous droits compris. 19366. Prière de conserver ce ticket pour être présenté à toute requisition.*” Then the Printer’s name: “*Paris. Impr. H. Mommons, 200 Boulevard Voltaire.*”

Certainly the Moulin de la Galette is, in its sinister way, an absolute Lautrec, practically the same as it was, in his time and in mine.

I wanted a more excited, a more animal, a more alluring manner of dancing than I found there when I first entered it; I wanted some deliberate way of dealing with life, choosing those hours of carnival, when for an allotted time we put on masks, and coloured dresses, and dance a measure or two with strangers, which is an escape from life felt to become too overwhelming. There was none of the whirling gaiety of the Chahut dancers who used to excite us in the Moulin Rouge. What was lacking? I asked myself. What was lacking was certainly the essential. Casting these thoughts aside, as I happened to be gazing vaguely at the hatless girls who

danced, a sudden flash of humour wakened me out of this torpor; a sentence I had read in a book I had bought the day before, "*Trottoirs et Lupanars*" in regard to hired women: "*Mais j'y pense, on les aime peut-être parce qu'elles ont des chapeaux, car, depuis le dernière circulaire du Préfet de police, être en cheveux est un crime!*"

Suddenly a kind of chahut tune which I seem to remember blares out, stridently and discordantly, with a kind of animal fury; which stirs the animality in these dancers who circle rapidly around the hall. There is much more movement, much more excitement, much more tossing of heads and twirls of the feet. It gives me the effect of a Degas, of one of his flame-like coloured pastels; the effect also of that sensuality—here, for a wonder, not altogether rowdy—which circulates in the heated air, in the suffocating atmosphere which emanates from the crowd. Then comes the pause, the flushed faces, the tidying of hats and hair, the nervous agitation, the sidelong glances. At this moment a horrible little Lesbian leaves the crowd and sits alone at a table—*une espèce de garçon*.

At half past eleven I notice some of the dancers opening a swing-door which clashes back on them. I see in huge letters: "*Grands Jardins. Point de vue Unique.*" I follow the others, climb a long wooden ladder and meet some of the hatless girls, painted and peculiar, on the stairs; then find myself on a huge uneven dirty scrap of a garden which seems neglected and infected. It is railed in by wooden palings, which keep one from falling sheer down into la rue Lépic. I never saw such thick dust except in Moscow, which is almost with-

out shadow, open to all the oppressions of the sky. Its parks, the Soloinisky, for instance, miles on miles of woods, through which long, dusty roads pierce like high-roads, are without restful corners, are themselves an oppression. I thought of Sofia, a place at once violent and sullen, in which everything is dusty, and dingy and half-used or half-finished. Everything is crude, sordid, just as much a mixture of sordidness and of crudity—besides the sense of dinginess—as in the garden of the Moulin. There I had, on all kinds of irregularities, stumbled over heaps of uneven ground; it was sombre where the sinister trees sheltered the lovers on the low seats under the windmill; more and more sombre as I walked around it and ran into a gendarme. The enormous bulk of the old windmill loomed there like something gigantic—like Don Quixote's—with its huge wooden wheels that never turn, blackened and tormented, a thing at once monstrous and helpless; a thing—so it struck my imagination—that had seen generation after generation pass and perish; that had seen these generations circle around it; that remains there wicked and menacing—a menacing and wicked emblem of Evil.

There is a wonderful view over Paris from that height, from the lighted garden; the curved crescent moon, a myriad of scintillating stars in a pale blue sky; a vision of smoking roofs, endless; in a word, an abrupt ocean of lights. Sinister, to a certainty, is the place I stood on, warily watching all that could be seen; sinister against the stars; sinister against the huge motionless windmill, bizarre and bewildering; sinister in the aspect of the young harlot who leans over the railings close to me, who sings

Tra-la-la! Sinister, finally, as a vision of all the Vices.

La Danse au Moulin-de-la-Galette, Montmartre, has that absolute perfection of conception and of execution in which Lautrec is unique. He shows three quarters of the room; a huge crowd, in much admired disorder. Couples turn and sway to the sensual dance-tunes. Curiously prominent—as he always is—one sees the traditional gendarme who gently shoves back a tall man, overcoat up to his ears, who is certainly quarrelsome. He masses his crowd in an inextricable manner; not the seething mass I saw in the *Moulin-Rouge*—a sordid one. In the foreground Lautrec places three women and one man, the invariable girls—what one calls the hatless crew—who are seated

on the other side of the barrier; one stares at the dancers; next to her is a stupid-faced girl, whose sloping shoulders are painted with an amazing accuracy—a scrumpy kind of slut. The third has a beautiful strange face, vivacious, almost pure in the outline from forehead to chin; she has ripe red thick pouting lips; dark eyes with thick black eyelashes. Here there is a certain quietude in the heart of the storm. What is extraordinary is that his vision of the *Moulin* painted in 1896 gives to me, literally and absolutely, the same vision I had on the night I spent there. All that is so astonishing, that I can but wonder what the ghost of Lautrec, were it to return to Parish would find at all surprising, after the eternity of its death.

Albert Perkins

By BENJAMIN THOM

Pigwidgeons it is rumored aren't:
Dwenger and troll and loup-garou
Men depose are fabulous nonsense—
That is, Albert, men like you.

Will-o-the-wisp and djinn and banshee,
Flippertigibbet and nis and deev—
Certainly none of these nursery fictions
Men like you believe.

How is it then grave skeptical Albert
Perkins you have fallen thrall
To this quite absurd, well—lady who
Doesn't exist at all?

The Fox Woman

By ELIZABETH J. COATSWORTH

SHE was the first to speak: "You are right, I am a fox woman. These silk kimonos and brocaded obis, this hair like a wig of lacquer, and these geta with their red thongs passing between my toes—they are all so much enchantment, so much mummery to amuse myself when the moon shines along the water of the rice terraces and I hear the sound of singing and the playing of the koto that comes up from the villages like smoke blown from a fire. Then I grow tired running in the moon with my nose tipped with flame; I grow tired carrying through the fields the messages of Inari and calling songs to the moon, and exploring the dark avenues of the cryptomeria and the shrines that are raised to us, and a loneliness comes upon me in the midst of my companions. It was not to lure your soul to destruction that I created this little house by the roadside, and threw the image of a beautiful face across the shoji that you might see it in passing. See there on the shelf stands the image of the Buddha, with the light of my lantern on his face. It is true that he is but an appearance, yet all the universe is but an appearance, and he is as real as the solemn statues that sit in the temples year after year with the doves cooing among the eaves. On nights like this I pray to him with my forehead on the matting, saying 'O Buddha made by a fox, have pity upon a fox.' Under his benediction you are safe. And I have even remembered to

create a cricket in a little cage of wicker that he may sing as we talk. Of what are you afraid? Of the loneliness of heart of a fox, or of the beauty with which she has clothed herself on this spring evening? You would not be afraid if you saw me running along the ground with the dew wet on my fur, and the stars shining in my eyes. And here you shall sit upon mats that will be none the less soft because they are not true mats, and you shall see me dance more beautifully than any dancer you have ever seen, so that the only sound will be the rustle of my skirts and the deep intake of your breathing; and you shall have saki from cups of white jade, like those the seven sages of China drank from long ages ago when they left the courts and all the trials of man to live among the mountains far, far from the dense shapes of reality. Of what are you afraid? I will sing you songs of the old days of the gods and you will see the moonlight fall through the shoji in blue fragrance upon the yellow heart of this little room, and incense will rise to your nostrils bringing with it dreams, and you will forget that I am a fox, and think that I am an empress who has come to you from the grave with soft words and sighings. My hair is blue-black and heavier than a fringe of the thickest silk, and my eyes are like lacquer set in ivory, and my body is a willow tree swaying in the south wind. We are all visions dreamed by the gods, as they sleep. If I am a

vision of a single evening and you perhaps of seventy years, am I the less lovely for that? Do not leave me, for even a fox can be grateful, and my heart is estranged from the moor and the wind and the dew, and yearns after the comfort of human intercourse and human laughter and praise."

The Mouse Hunt

By FREEMAN PINCKNEY SMITH

I.

"There's a mouse in my granary,
There's a mouse in my bin,
And I'll call all my retainers—
Dogs, cats, and serving-men."

II.

He called all his retainers,
They hunted from cellar to loft,
But never a mouse they found
In manor house or in croft.

III.

"I'll call in my carpenter,
I'll call in my smith,
To see if we can't trap him—
All his kin and his kith."

IV.

The traps were made,
The traps were set,
But the mouse he abideth
In my Lord's house yet.

V.

For in my Lord's heart was hidden
A secret so close and so deep
That only a mouse could find it—
The place of his storehouse and keep.

Rhythmic Dynamics

By OSWALD HERZOG

THE holy and immemorial task which has been imposed upon the creative arts is this: to extend, to enlarge the radius of human vision.

The creative arts realize, they convert the intellectual-subjective that inheres in knowledge, into the Objective. Thus Art and Knowledge go hand in hand.

The productive epochs of Knowledge or Learning coincide with the productive periods of Art.

The *Zeitgeist* is the band that unites them.

The epoch through which we have just passed, this material epoch with its great triumphs of biological research, was enriched by the artists who evolved impressionism. They gave to it the faculty of distinguishing new color-values.

This material epoch is now succeeded by one of a more ideal tendency—of a tendency of the idea.

Movement—Time and Space—growth and decay—cosmic laws now usurp the interest of science.

An accompanying phenomenon of this tendency is the greater emphasis placed upon rhythmic in the new creative arts.

But before we are able to adopt this objective point of view and participate in this movement of the time, it becomes necessary for us to regulate the circle of our vision afresh—as in every new epoch of art.

It is the artist who is first able to achieve this feat. And this enables him to create things which must arouse

the opposition of his fellowmen, until they, too, are able to find this new optical focus.

The new art does not deem it necessary to linger any longer upon the old material points of view.

Proceeding from the rhythmical point of view, this art strives to penetrate deeper and deeper into the inwardness of natural law.

Works of art are no longer to be subdued to the purpose of being mere simulacra of natural phenomena; their chief value is based upon a free forming, weighing and assembling of values—upon co-ordination, upon rhythmicisation—of the whole, in order that the orders and ordinances of natural law may be apperceived by means of the feelings and the senses. Above all by the sense of touch.

As soon as this subconsciousness of the sense of touch attains to consciousness, facts, results, things are evident, that is to say, the other senses help to confirm the laws.

Rhythm is the proportion between time and space—the absolute law of becoming and disintegration.

Space is relative time and the rhythm of space is the order in which the space-intervals occur, that is, Metric.

Time is living space:—dynamics its sensuous expression in the form of rhythm.

The entire growth and decay of the Cosmos, that is the whole material world of bodily forms, is a chronological-spa-

tial process—dynamics—and these dynamics become visible to us as soon as we have learned to recognize their rhythmical effects—in the shape of form.

All forms are the effects of polar dynamics—of the thermal energies of the heavenly bodies on the one hand and of the frigid energies of the universe on the other.

The warmth-energies force matter into the emptiness of inter-stellar space, and then the energies of this space, acting as condensing forces, press matter together.

It is the relation of the waves of vibrations to one another that gives birth to the rhythmic forms which confront our eyes everywhere as manifold apparitions of nature.

Whenever we come to consider it worth while to observe these relations of the vibrations in forms, instead of seeing things purely as intellectual or rather mental concepts, then we shall teach ourselves to see the pulse-beat of Nature.

Then we shall experience, yes, *see* the soul—the will—the operation of Nature as a process of time, follow it up and through the successive upbuilding of her forms.

Our senses are by no means so delicate that they are able to respond with feelings to the most subtle of these vibrations.

Our senses perceive less of these separate vibrations or waves than the operation of complexi of vibrations—forms—our senses respond to and recognize natural law.

Such Rhythmic forms are, for example, to be found in the seven tones of the

scale of sound and the seven rainbow colors of light.

Differentiation ensues through the operation of dynamic factors.

It is thus easy to prove that our sense of hearing receives these dynamic values in a natural manner, and equally naturally that tones of music resound in us either as consonance or dissonance, as something static or something in motion.

But it is otherwise with our sense of sight. We did not choose to let vibrations or waves of matter operate upon our eyes in an objective manner.

We did not put ourselves to the test to discover what or which dynamic effects these waves had upon us, but we decreed that the eye was to travel along the lines of least resistance, and to see things as things, as convenient mental concepts, in order to arrange them in convenient and comparative categories, and to use them as symbols of speech for human and homely purposes.

It is for this reason that we have never set eyes upon the reality of nature, never learned to see the shaping and dissolving dynamics in play and interplay.

We did not see the gesture of Nature and her voice did not penetrate into our inner being.

Just as the whole alphabet of rhythmical tone-forms lies between the base-tone and the octave in music, so do we find the visible rhythmical-dynamic forms of the corporeal world, the play of forces between the poles of rest and motion, lying between the straight line or surface and the rondure of the circle or the globe.

The forces of material expansion throw up the surface into a vault, the

forces of condensation in space press the vaulting back, or crush in the surface—in the opposite direction.

When the opposing forces are equal in values we have the flat surface—stagnation, rest.

It is our duty to leave this play and interplay of forces to be interpreted by our eyes, and to command our intellects to remain silent.

And then our eyes will report to us the onset and the upheaval, the flowing and the ebbing of the natural dynamics of the corporeal world—of victory

and defeat, of joy and sorrow in the eternal stream of life.

Then, and then only, shall we be fit to *understand* Nature and see ourselves enmembered in the pan-dynamics of the Cosmos.

And then, and then only shall we be able to regard with comprehending eyes those works which the modern artist creates according to the natural law within him—works which may not fit into the categories of human optics, but which none-the-less are living and vibrant parallels of Nature.

Reflected

By HORTENSE FLEXNER

The moon's a corpse,
Frozen and still
She drifts in silvery ashes
Through the night.
And yet this earth,
Still fretted with the scarlet pulsing thing
Called life,
Draws from the moon's pale glamor and decay,
Her eerie trick of loveliness
What welter of hot passion and new blood!

Paris Letter

By ARTHUR MOSS

THE Russian Ballet, most amazingly rejuvenated, has just completed its regular Paris season. Just a year ago, the Diaghilew organization, bereft of all its really great leaders, Bolm, Karasavina, Pavlova, Fokine, Massine, Nijinsky, and Fokina, performed most dispiritedly. Though it never had been addicted to the star system, there had always been a nucleus of really remarkable dancers.

On the first night of the 1921 season, it was quite evident that without leaders there could be no team work. Only the beautiful Lydia Lopokova remained; but she scored more on pulchritude than on terpsichorean ability. The inclusion in the Diaghilew productions of the electric spirited group of Spanish dancers, Cuadro Flamenco, only intensified the devitalization of the Russians. To further jolt the faithful, the Russian Ballet for the first time had to meet competition in the shape of the Swedish Ballet. This latter group, while not up to the Russian standard in quality of dancing, nevertheless proved a serious menace through their experimental fervor. Among the innovations that the Swedes produced were the Milhaud-Claudell-Parr ballet *L'Homme et Son Desir*, and the Groupe des Six ballet *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*.

On the 18th of May this year, within five minutes of the lift of the curtain, it was apparent that the Russian Ballet had been miraculously revitalized. First on the bill was the old shop-worn *Carnaval*, but the dancing was amazingly new and youthful. Then came *Le Mariage de la Belle au Bois Dormant*, in itself a mere disjointed collection of dances, but an admirable vehicle for the display of the virtuosity of the new members of the group. Idzikovsky's elevations made me gasp: Zverew, La Nijinska (a sister of the great Nijinsky), Dalbaicin (the lovely Spaniard from the Cuadro Flamenco), Wilzak, Nemchinova,—all spirited and splendid technicians. In the ultra-modern Strawinsky creation *Renard*, La Nijinska got every last bit out of the delightfully grotesque part of the fox. Her best performance, however, was in Strawinsky's *Sacre de Printemps*, the complex and brilliant production that years ago was booed off the Paris stage. Apparently the audiences have almost kept pace with the artists, for this year *Sacre de Printemps* was rather hysterically acclaimed. The first bill of the Russian Ballet closed with *Prince Igor* as did the opening bill last year, thus affording an excellent basis for comparison. The leading part this time was danced, or rather acted by the burly Wladimiroff. Through sheer personal force that reached well across the footlights, he drove this barbaric Tartar epic up to a terrific climax. It was some time

before I thought of any obvious comparison with Adolf Bolm, and then I felt that Wladimiroff was not disparaged thereby. Unquestionably, the Russian Ballet has come back in every sense of the term.

Another organization which has delighted followers of the dance in Paris is the Cambodian Ballet. This group of dancers came to the Paris Opera by way of the great Colonial Exposition at Marseilles. Their dances are pantomimic and extremely subtle, and the dancers display the most extraordinary flexibility. While the story is being danced and mimed, a chorus of chanters and a native orchestra provide the explanatory accompaniment. This orchestra, by the way, produced the most perfect rhythms I have ever heard—super-Jazz is the only term—syncopation developed to the Nth degree, a development of great interest to modern composers. *Encore le Jazz Cambodigienne!*

Walking In An Inland City

By GEORGE O'NEIL

Monotonous, unfertile street,
People and trees as dull as rust;
A blaze and shimmering of heat,
Cars clattering through clouds of dust.

O sea wind bitter in the sedge....
Green wave with the foaming edge!

Buildings that hunch and brood and stare,
Windows to let the darkness out;
Doors, cornices and chimneys square,
Signs that grimace and grin and shout.

Tall Greek columns as pure as snow,
Supporting nothing in a row!

Reviews

ACCURACY AND BEAUTY

"THE ENORMOUS ROOM"

BY E. C. CUMMINGS

(*Boni & Liveright, 1922.*)

THE special qualities to be found in "The Enormous Room" are those least common in personal records of privations and indignities suffered during the war. The book is light and hard, precise and full of grace. I get from it a sense of power held and released, the throb of the dynamo and the swift direction of the shaft of light. Equal and rarer is its loveliness, incommunicable at second hand. The faults of the book are easy to name. The airy smartness of the writing is a little irritating; it is precocious, and the manner slips occasionally into mannerism. Yet the feeling of something going forward and arriving, with a definite and appropriate rhythm, takes this book decisively out of comparison with nearly all the private reports of the war; it has the authority of a work of art in intention; as the first prose work of a young man it drastically shows up the trivial and half-intelligent work of nearly all of Mr. Cummings' own contemporaries.

It is the account of several months passed in French prisons during the war by E. E. Cummings, a young American painter and poet. The official case can not be exceptional. Mr. Cummings and a friend, called B., were volunteers in a Sanitary Section of the Norton-Harjes Ambulance; they had little respect for their commanding officer; B. wrote some letters which were intercepted and considered of doubtful aid in winning

the war; the two men were therefore (I am trying to be as dispassionate as the original reporter) *therefore* held in custody most of the time in a detention jail at La Ferté Macé, in Normandy. At the end of a few months Mr. Cummings was released and B. was transferred to another prison. (A few particularly atrocious details of official stupidity and callousness are set forth in a preface by the author's father.) All of these things, including Mr. Cummings' intelligent scepticism about the war, must have been repeated several hundred times and are no doubt considered, officially, as regrettable incidents in a less regrettable upheaval. The details of the imprisonment are common. At La Ferté Macé Mr. Cummings witnessed or took part in a number of entirely not unusual escapades and events; he hated the superintendent and the orderlies and made wholly reasonable discoveries about his mates in the Enormous Room; towards the end he suffered something approaching a mental catastrophe.

A book with such material can be distinguished only by the particular kind of intelligence which the writer has, both for his perception and for his report. It was Mr. Cummings' good fortune to be a painter, he had to see things directly; his interest in abstract, or non-representational, painting and drawing had taught him to be unaware of what things are supposed to look like; he had overcome the purely intellectual prejudices of the eye. He describes, let us say, a black and misty night at a railway-depot, the train long delayed, the

crowd of *poilus* frantic at the prospect of becoming technically deserters:

Suddenly burst out of the loquacious opacity a dozen handfuls of Algerians, their feet swaggering with fatigue, their eyes burning apparently by themselves—faceless in the black mist.

Or, on the way to prison, at night, along a country road:

I half straightened my no longer obedient body; and jumped: face to face with a little wooden man hanging all by itself in a grove of low trees.

The wooden body, clumsy with pain, burst into fragile legs with absurdly large feet and funny writhing toes; its little stiff arms made abrupt cruel angles with the road. About its stunted loins clung a ponderous and jocular fragment of drapery. On one terribly brittle shoulder the droll lump of its neckless head ridiculously lived. There was in this complete silent doll a gruesome truth of instinct, a success of uncanny poignancy, an unearthly ferocity of rectangular emotion.

For perhaps a moment the almost obliterated face and mine eyed one another in the silence of intolerable autumn.

Who was this wooden man? Like a sharp black mechanical cry in the spongy organism of gloom stood the coarse and sudden sculpture of his torment: the big mouth of night carefully spurted the angular actual language of his martyred body. I had seen him before in the dream of some mediaeval saint, with a thief sagging at either side, surrounded by crisp angels. To-night he was alone: save for myself, and the moon's minute flower pushing between slabs of fractured cloud.

It will be easier to appreciate what Mr. Cummings has done in passages like these if one has ceased to believe that it is possible to say a thing in more ways than one. (I mention again, since it is relevant, that Mr. Cummings is a poet as well as a painter.) The misleading phrase about the *mot juste* is in need of analysis, for by itself it implies that there is a choice of words, more or less accurate, and that a thing is *better* said by some than by others, best by the one inevitable word. The truth being, as anyone knows who has been asked to tell what a poem "means," that you can say almost the same thing, but you can-

not say absolutely the same thing, in other words. Mr. Orage in his "Readers and Writers" quotes from a new translation of the Gospels: "What joy for those with the poor man's feelings! Heaven's Empire is for them." The question of gain and loss of connotations and traditions, is beside the point. The quoted words actually say something different from "Blessed are the poor. For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." A dome of many-coloured glass is not the same thing as a many-coloured dome of glass. It is true that one expresses a workable formula whether one says "Two plus two is four" or "Two and two are four"; but one is far from saying the same thing in the two versions.

This is, naturally, an essential point in all considerations of style and I mention it here because it is easy to assume that the oddly chosen words in Mr. Cummings' description are verbal tricks, irrelevant to the thing presented. The fact is that to a great extent Mr. Cummings has seen things not seen before, and the reason is that he has seen without preconception; his vision has not been distorted by ideas. Before the exact and peculiar word, the precise rhythm, the fresh cadence, there had to be the thing seen, not necessarily for the first time, but with a clear eye. Passing beyond the counsels of de Maupassant, Mr. Cummings has managed to see the tree directly and at first glance; he has been unconscious of what other trees look *like*. He is, therefore, eccentric if we hold the average eye to have the true vision; he is normal if poets and visionaries are normal. The fact that he describes a number of things so that they seem unreal to me, the reader, is possibly not so important as it

sounds. Fidelity is usually judged by what the reader thinks, by plausibility; the question is to what the artist shall be faithful, to the thing he sees or to our idea of the thing.

The theory about which Mr. Cummings is good enough to be explicit is this:

I refer to the fact that, for an educated gent or lady, to create is first of all to destroy—that there is and can be no such thing as authentic art until the *bon trucs* (whereby we are taught to see and imitate on canvas and in stone and by words this so-called world) are entirely and thoroughly and perfectly annihilated by that vast and painful process of Unthinking which may result in a minute bit of purely personal feeling. Which minute bit is art.

From "vast and painful process of Unthinking" as the *only* process I specifically dissent; but if it happens to be what Mr. Cummings has a little accomplished it achieves pragmatic justification in the immediacy with which everything seen and touched and heard and tasted and smelled is rendered in this book.

I have spent so much time on the aesthetic qualities of "The Enormous Room" because they seem to me of the first importance and because (with the exception of Mr. Dos Passos, also a painter and poet) no one has more than touched upon them. Interest has centered in the appearance of two or three "dirty words," and, among the more intelligent critics, in the subject-matter. The best part of the book, in the second aspect, is the series of portraits; and it is amusing to note that under Mr. Cummings' beautiful rhetoric is concealed a variety of the conventional adoration of the roughneck and the *schöne Seele*. The Wanderer, Zoo-Loo, Surplice, and Jean le Negre are all of them gentle, simple, honest souls. Their sorrows and their

delights seem to have surprised their historian equally, and he is magnificently sentimental about them:

—Boy, Kid, Nigger, with the strutting muscles—take me up into your mind once or twice before I die (you know why: just because the eyes of me and you will be full of dirt some day). Quickly take me up into the bright child of your mind, before we both go suddenly all loose and silly (you know how it will feel). Take me up (carefully, as if I were a toy) and play carefully with me once or twice, before I and you go suddenly all limp and foolish. Once or twice before you go into the great Jack Roses and ivory—(once or twice, Boy, before we together go wonderfully down into the Big Dirt laughing, bumped with the last darkness).

With no perceptible irony Mr. Cummings occasionally gives the impression that these people have a special, absolute significance, that they are more real than sophisticated people, and that the only salvation is to become as childlike as they are. With that, one cannot quarrel; one can only say that it may be beautiful and is surely tiresome.

The thing I am certain of is that the writing in this book is important; it is what language, and specifically the American language, is for. Mr. Cummings' poems appear in *The Dial* and I am of the staff of that journal; I do not wish to discuss him as poet. But in all impersonality I must note that the rhythms and cadences of his to me beautiful poetry are with appropriate modulations here used in prose, and that the prose style is notably enriched by the infusion. There are no muggy edges, no vague outlines; everything is precisely put down, everything is firm and hard. The images are exact and sharp, the words decisive, certain. Naturally it is not a simple style at first glance; it is in the genius of the language, but it is still, necessarily, affected by the genius of one man. There is, in addition,

one other influence; that of James Joyce. Towards the end of the book Mr. Cummings has written a whole page exactly in the manner of the rendered stream of consciousness in "Ulysses"; it is not a parody, but the proof of the method. Elsewhere he recalls no other writer. Even if one remembers the railway journey of Stephen Dedalus—"and silently, at intervals of four seconds, the telegraphpoles held the galloping notes of music between punctual bars" one must recognize the direct individual perception of this description of the return to New York:

"The tall, impossibly tall, incomparably tall, city choulderlingly upward into hard sunlight leaned a little through the octaves of its parallel edges, leaningly strode upward into firm hard snowy sunlight; the noises of America nearingly throbbed with smokes and hurrying dots which are men and which are women and which are things new and curious and hard and strange and vibrant and immense, lifting with great ondulous stride firmly into immortal sunlight...."

When I first wrote this review I ended with a question: "One wonders what American critics will make of this book which they have done so little to produce." The delay in printing has answered the question, and the outlook is brighter for Mr. Cummings and for American letters through Mr. Cummings, than for the critics.

GILBERT SELDES.

TWO BOOKS FROM THE FRENCH

"CALVARY"

BY OCTAVE MIRBEAU
(Lieber & Lewis, 1922.)

"MR. ANTIPHILLOS, SATYR"
BY REMY DE GOURMONT
(Lieber & Lewis, 1922.)

THE translations of these two books from the French and their publication is a worthwhile service to letters. Both were written many

years ago. Neither represents the best work of its author yet each contains enough that is characteristic to instruct and entertain the reader. Either book would do credit to a lesser man.

Of these the De Gourmont seems the slighter. It is the idyllic tale of a satyr or rather a faun of antiquity brought up to date and introduced into the midst of our clothed and perverted civilization. He is frankly a pagan creature, that is to say, a pagan according to the modern sense of the word, a creature free from conventions and conventional consequences. The real pagan of Greece or Rome was, Lord knows, as prim and hemmed-in a creature as a Zulu or a Rotarian. De Gourmont's faun makes comment on contemporary life and especially contemporary love which are not altogether complimentary. But the work is hardly a satire on modern life as it has been called by the over-eager admirers of the great French philosopher. Rather the book seems to me the pastime of a writer for the time being amusing himself away from deeper concerns. There is, however, a delicacy of touch about "Mr. Antiphilos, Satyr," which saves it from being altogether trivial, that and the assurance which transpires that its author is a fine, sophisticated intellect. It is a little book by a big man.

"Calvary," by Octave Mirbeau, is realism one step removed from *sensibilité*. It portrays the soul anguish of a poor sensitive creature, his unsympathetic, morbid early home life, his reaction to the Franco-Prussian War as a simple soldier in the French Army and

last his love for a vain light o' love which finally ruins him. He spends fortune, talent, self-respect and almost reason on this bourgeois enchantress and the final page leaves him out in the cold, having been superceded as pounce or *amant de coeur*, if you like, by the artist friend who had originally warned him against the lady.

One cannot always sympathize with this "hero" in his tears and his tantrums. The book almost verges on burlesque. Jean Mintie is such a soft piece of meat. More interesting than this self-crucifixion I found the chapter devoted to his experience in the war. Written long before the skirmish of 1914-18 the account might easily stand for this last war. The same senseless massacre and waste, the same ridiculous subalterns, the lack of system and intelligence, the addled higher officers, all the gigantic cruelty and clowning that only those of us who served in the army can appreciate. It makes me believe that armies have hardly changed since Hannibal and I am sure that a K. P. or a mule skinner under Caesar or Xerxes would have no difficulty fraternizing with a private in the late A. E. F. If you have not read Mr. Dos Passos' "indictment of army mules and slumgulleon stew," "Three Soldiers," buy a copy of "Calvary" and read the war chapter. It is infinitely better written and what is more important, it is shorter.

The publishers of these two books are newcomers in the field. What they have already done is a notable achievement. They promise the translation of "A Rebours" into English under the title, "Against the Grain," and other good things.

SLABS OF THE SUNBURNT WEST

BY CARL SANDBURG

(Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922.)

IN much the same frame of mind as I listen to a symphony, do I read Carl Sandburg's poems. I sit and wait for meanings—meanings to flash out at me like thunderbolts, meanings to glide out, in and around and over me like some soft perfume (the latter meanings felt rather than acutely understood). I read, for instance, the titular poem of "Slabs of the Sunburnt West," as I listen to Cesar Franck's Symphony in D Minor. This symphony is not altogether intelligible to me. But I am not entirely regretful that it isn't. For out of its very suggestiveness (as over against any definite message it may have for my neighbor who sits listening beside me, or may have had for Franck when he first caught its beauty on paper) I find meanings in it which my own life recognizes. In it I find reflected my own sorrows, my own stumblings in the dark, my own fears and hopes. "It is not all light in that soul," I say with M. Rolland of Franck; but listening to the music, I am aware that I listen to one who has received unspeakable intimations...

Unspeakable intimations concerning life...these, I believe, Carl Sandburg has. And this belief makes me a ready and sympathetic reader of his poems—even if I may not be an intelligent reader of them.

"Slabs of the Sunburnt West" is a smaller book than Mr. Sandburg's other three, but it holds within it more poems, than any of his other books do, that say nothing to me. That is not criticism. It

is only a statement of fact. I suspect it may be a criticism of me which I am willing to admit not from, in any sense, humility, but because I have my own pet suspicion about all literary authority and all literary criticism. (There seem to be no standards in literature, with the possible exception of "taste," and that varies as much as its inevitable but extremely variable qualifying adjective "good" does, and consequently is in as ill repute as any of the other old women of easy virtue.) It would be absurd for me to speak of those few poems in the book whose beckoning I am blind to.

Three-quarters of this book richly rewards me, reading. It carries some of the most vivid pictures Mr. Sandburg has penned. In "The Windy City" he catalog the winds, and his catalog becomes doubly expressive because of its position in this long poem:

Corn wind in the fall, come off the black
lands, come off the whisper of the silk
hangers, the lap of the flat spear
leaves.

Blue water wind in summer, come off
the blue miles of lake, carry your
inland sea blue fingers, carry us cool,
carry your blue to our homes.

White spring winds, come off the bag
wool clouds, come off the running
melted snow, come white as the arms
of snow-born children.

Gray fighting winds, come along on the
tearing blizzard tails, the snouts of the
hungry hunting storms, come fighting
gray in winter.

He views Washington Monument by
night:

The stone goes straight.
A lean swimmer dives into the night sky,
Into half-moon mist.

His pictures flash out with an uncanny
distinctness::

...blackwing birds fitted onto slits
of the sunsets they were flying into...

...And there is peace everywhere...

only the man's face is a red gray plaster
of storm in the center of peace
...so he stands with a candle at the
door... so he stands with a red gray
face.

...I ask why I go on five crutches,
tongues, ears, nostrils—all cripples—
eyes and nose—both cripples—
I ask why these five cripples
limp and squint and gag with me,
why they say with the oldest frozen
faces:

Man is a poor stick and a sad squirt;
if he is poor he can't dress up;
if he dresses up he don't know any
place to go.

Mr. Sandburg has the knack. He makes pictures of abstractions, he makes pictures out of thoughts with a vividness that is biblical, and with a naturalness that comes of a unique courage to break through syntactical as well as literary tradition. His imagery is stimulating. Is there another poet in the land who could or would venture to take the words of a once popular song:

All dressed up and no place to go!

and give it a place in a poem with the result that the poem is enriched, and the phrase itself becomes alive with a peculiarly fresh significance? Carl Sandburg somehow is able to breathe life into the dust of even conventional phraseology.

Of the three long poems included, "And So Today" is the most moving. It is a topical poem, treating the dramatic burial of the unknown American soldier at Arlington. What drivel might be written about such an affair! But Mr. Sandburg's poem is a gold-mine of meaning. It is a slaughter of the lies and hypocrisy which could and did so easily fester at the roots of such a colorful flower as this burial service was. "And So Today" is a poem of fierce fascination, of deepest irony.

Following the catafalque, the poet sees not only the solemn soldiery, but

skeleton men and boys riding skeleton
horses,
the rib bones shine, the rib bones curve,
shine with savage, elegant curves—
a jawbone runs with a long white slant,
a skull dome runs with a long white arch,
bone triangles click and rattle,
elbows, ankles, white line slants—
shining in the sun past the White House...
stems of roses in their teeth,
rose dark leaves at their white jaw
slants—
and a horse laugh question nickers and
whinnies,
moans with a whistle out of horse head
teeth:
why? who? where?

The rhythm is mocking, nervous, hys-
teric. Later, Mr. Sandburg listens to:

The honorable orators,
Always the honorable orators,
Buttoning the buttons on their prinz
alberts,
Pronouncing the syllables "sac-ri-fice,"
Juggling those bitter salt-soaked syl-
lables—
Do they ever gag with hot ashes in their
mouths?
Do their tongues ever shrivel with a pain
of fire
Across those simple syllables "sac-ri-
fice"?

(There was one orator people far off
saw.
He had on a gunnysack shirt over his
bones,
And he lifted an elbow socket over his
head,
And he lifted a skinny signal finger.
And he had nothing to say, nothing
easy—
He mentioned ten million men, men-
tioned them as having gone west, men-
tioned them as shoving up the daisies.
We could write it all on a postage stamp,
what he said.
He said it and quit and faded away,
A gunnysack shirt on his bones.)

The poem ends with a modification
of its slow bitter refrain:

And so to-day—they lay him away—
the boy nobody knows the name of—
they lay him away in granite and steel—
with music and roses—under a flag—
under a sky of promises.

"Truth and beauty! Beauty and
truth!" I suppose, after all, truth varies
as much as the weather or the adjective

"good" does—and needs to. And yet it
would appear that truth ought to be the
easiest thing in the world to tell. But
it isn't, because a sincere demand for
truth destroys too many out-worn but
greatly beloved "ideals." The truthful
attitude—and truth is really only an
attitude struck—is a rarity much rarer
than the aesthetic. Carl Sandburg has
the truthful attitude, he tries his dam-
dest to reach the so-called heart of
things, fearing no idea, no convention—
and whether he actually seems to touch
the truth, depends, I imagine, in the end,
chiefly upon the particular frame of
mind his readers are in. But I, for one,
believe that, although it is perhaps not
all light in his soul, the unspeakable in-
timations are there—and that he has not
only the ability but the courage to see
and to express an approximation of
them. What more could one ask of any
poet?

WALTER YUST.

NEGRO FOLK RHYMES

"NEGRO FOLK RHYMES—WISE AND
OTHERWISE."

Edited With a Study by
THOMAS W. TALLEY
(Macmillan, 1922.)

AMONG the meagre literary riches
of America the sorrow-songs
and spirituals of the negroes
have a more secure position than any of
the indigenous ballads. It must be ad-
mitted that the ballad literature of the
whites, with the barely possible excep-
tion of a little which has been trans-
mitted from England, is inferior to that
of the blacks. The cowboy ballads rare-
ly attain high merit. The spirituals do
so repeatedly. Also, the negro is the
originator of those "Blue Songs" which
in America have become the common

property of the submerged tenth of all colors and races and which are at this moment our only indisputable living folk literature (a literature which I ardently hope will be collected and printed, though it will be denied the mails).

Considering the high quality of the negro folk poetry, one is compelled to believe that sooner or later individual negroes will produce in America a literature which will be as rare and delightful as the folk productions—characterized by those elements of melody, humor, emotion and ecstasy which make their racial songs supreme. I believe that the coming decade will see remarkable literature written in America by men of negro blood. At any rate, I hope so.

The collection of "Negro Folk Rhymes" edited with a study by Professor Thomas W. Talley is the excuse for these paragraphs. Though a thick book, it is slight and by no means entirely satisfactory. The collection, of course, comprises no spirituals, no sorrow-songs, none of the great lyric output of the American negro. It is a book of dance rhymes, nursery rhymes, jingles and humorous catches, charms, hunting songs, wise saws, play songs, etc. Most of the book is dreary reading. The editor has included many jingles which are traceable almost verbatim to Mother Goose, a few which are obvious versions of well-known poems, and many rhymes which are so light that it seems ridiculous to preserve them. But the fact remains that the actual folk poetry of any race, however trivial, is a treasure. It is unfortunate that the dance rhymes that were chanted by children and the catches that were sung in the pothouses of Babylon, Nineveh and Gomorrah, have not been preserved. The editor of

"Negro Folk Rhymes" has done a meritorious service. There are many authentic negro songs and catches in the collection and it should be in the hands of every person who is interested in balladry, folk-poetry or folk-ways. It certainly should be in the hands of every person who is interested in the negro.

Personally, I quarrel with many of the versions given. I am sure I know better ones. But it was an impossible task to collate all versions of these jingles or to print them all.

The study of the rhymes, which is of considerable length, is, I am sure, generally unsound, with much useless argument and exposition on the principles of rhythmic beat in song and chant and vague theorizing upon rhyme schemes, white and black, but with stimulating discussion of the actual origin and rendering of many types of song. It is in a way valuable, but suffers from Professor Talley's evident lack of familiarity with general literature.

One finds many of the old favorites (often in what seem to be garbled versions) and many that are less known. There are hundreds of rhymes and jingles in the volume and I quote but a few lines here and there to show the general tenor of the collection:

Randsome Tantsome! Gwine to de Fair?
Randsome Tantsome! W'at you gwinter
wear?

* * *

Pennywinkle, pennywinkle, poke out yo'
ho'n!

* * *

Doodlebug! Doodle-bug! Come on to
supper.

* * *

Who's been here since I'se been gone?
A pretty liddle gal wid a blue dress on.

De ole hen sot on tucky aigs,
 An' she hatch out goslings three.
 Two wus tuckies wid slender legs,
 An' one was a bumblebee.
 * * *

Up de hill an' down de level!
 Up de hill an' down de level!
 Granny's puppy treed de Devil.
 * * *

Dat Coon, he w'ar a undershirt;
 Dat 'Possum w'ar a gown.
 Br'er Rabbit, he w'ar a overcoat
 Wid buttons up an' down.
 * * *

Johnny, Johnny Bigfoot!
 Want a pair o' shoes?
 * * *

"Auntie, will yo' dog bite?"
 "No, Chile, no!"
 Chicken in de bread tray
 A-makin' up dough.

I quote in full, from the dance rhymes,
 "Juba" and "Jawbone."

JUBA

Juba dis, an' Juba dat,
 Juba skin dat Yaller Cat. Juba! Juba!

Juba jump an' Juba sing,
 Juba cut dat Pigeon's wing. Juba! Juba!

Juba, kick off Juba's shoe,
 Juba, dance dat Jubal Jew. Juba! Juba!

Juba, whirl dat foot about.
 Juba, blow dat candle out. Juba! Juba!

Juba circle, Raise de Latch.
 Juba do dat Long Dog Scratch. Juba!
 Juba!

JAWBONE

Samson, shout! Samson, moan!
 Samson, bring on yo' Jawbone.

Jawbone, walk! Jawbone, talk!
 Jawbone, eat wid a knife an' fo'k.

Walk, Jawbone! Jinny, come along!
 Yon'er goes Sally wid de bootees on.

Jawbone, ring! Jawbone, sing!
 Jawbone, kill dat wicked thing.

All who take pleasure in the spontaneous rhythms of folk-poetry, whether in the Scottish and Anglo-Saxon ballads or Mother Goose, will find much to please them in this volume.

JOHN MCCLURE.

Comment

MR. RICHARD ALDINGTON has printed in *The Literary Review* of July 8, 1922, a letter protesting against the statements contained in Mr. Kreymborg's communication on "Bel Esprit" which appeared in the June issue of *The Double Dealer* and against similar statements made by Mr. Pound in the *English New Age*.

Mr. Aldington's letter states that Mr. Aldington did not originate and was never connected with "Bel Esprit," a projected conceived by Mr. Pound, of which Mr. Aldington disapproves; that Mr. T. S. Eliot was never connected with "Bel Esprit," either as beneficiary or otherwise; and that in Mr. Aldington's opinion the printed statements of Mr. Kreymborg (and Mr. Pound) were unpardonable, "indelicate, offensive and vulgar."

We regret that Mr. Aldington construes the letter on "Bel Esprit" as casting reflections on Mr. Eliot. The letter was dispatched to us by Mr. Kreymborg, our European correspondent, who received his information from Mr. Pound. The "Bel Esprit" project seemed to us, though perhaps not feasible, quite honorable and praiseworthy. Were the facts exactly as stated, no imputations could be attached to the name of Mr. Eliot. However, we beg Mr. Aldington to remember that Mr. Kreymborg made it perfectly plain that Mr. Eliot himself knew nothing of the proposed "Bel Esprit" arrangement and was *not* consulted. We are sure that none of our readers were sufficiently obtuse to consider an alleged project in which he took no part as being a slur on Mr. Eliot.